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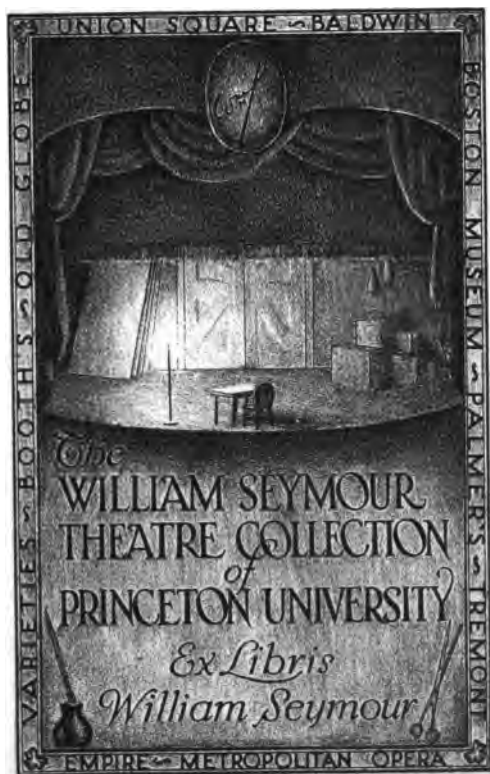
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THE PRODIGAL SON

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THE PRODIGAL SON

A DRAMA

In Four Acts

By HALL CAINE
“\

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

MCMV

*This play was performed
for copyright purposes at
the Grand Theatre, Isle of
Man, on November 2, 1904.*

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

STEPHEN MAGNUSSON, *Governor-General of Iceland*

ANNA, *his Wife*

MAGNUS STEPHENSSON, *their Elder Son*

OSCAR STEPHENSSON, *their Younger Son*

OSCAR NEILSEN (*commonly called FACTOR*), *Chief Merchant of
Iceland*

THORA NEILSEN, *his Elder Daughter*

HELGA NEILSEN, *his Younger Daughter*

MARGRET NEILSEN, *Sister to the Factor*

NEILS FINSEN

DOCTOR OLSEN

THE PASTOR

THE SHERIFF

THE DIRECTOR *of the Casino on the Riviera*

THE AGENT *of the Bank of Denmark*

ERIC ARNASSON

JÓN VIDALIN, *Farm Servant*

GUÐRÚN, *his Wife*

Waiters, Attendants, Boys and Girls, etc., etc.

RECAP

~~TH~~

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*Will be produced by Arthur Collins
at Theatre Royal Drury Lane,
London, and by Messrs. Liebler &
Co. and Messrs. Klaw & Erlanger,
at the New Amsterdam Theatre,
New York, on September 2, 1905.*

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

THE FIRST ACT

THE INN-FARM—ICELAND

THE SECOND ACT

GOVERNMENT HOUSE—ICELAND

THE THIRD ACT

THE CASINO—RIVIERA

THE FOURTH ACT

THE INN-FARM—ICELAND

THE FIRST ACT takes place in autumn ; the SECOND in summer ; the THIRD in spring and the FOURTH in winter.

A YEAR is supposed to elapse between ACTS ONE and TWO ; FIVE YEARS between ACTS TWO and THREE ; TEN YEARS between ACTS THREE and FOUR,

The plot of this play is almost identical with that of the author's novel under the same name, but the drama is an entirely independent version of the story, with such differences of structure as are required by a different art.

THE PRODIGAL SON

THE FIRST ACT

AN OPENING PICTURE represents a mountain pass in the Interior of Iceland. Snowcapped peaks, glistening glaciers, smoking mineral-springs, a blue lake, stretches of black lava and basaltic rock, with patches of grass, gleams of rivers and a small village in a broad plain beyond. It is early dawn in late summer.

When the curtain rises there are the calls of shepherds, the blowing of horns and the bark of dogs. The last of a flock of sheep come bleating down the pass, and disappear in the valley. Then comes a line of shepherds, some walking, others riding on Iceland ponies, all singing the shepherds' song, "Long live the Mountain-King." The Mountain-King rides in the middle of the line, with a shepherd walking on either side. The singing grows fainter as the shepherds descend; then darkness falls and the scene changes.

THE ACTING SCENE represents the interior of the Inn-Farm in the valley. Two chambers, back and front, connected by two steps and divided by opening with curtains. In wall of inner room a long window through which the landscape can be seen.

A

A table is laid for dinner, with flowers and other decorations. Flags and streamers are hung about the room as for a festival.

The front room, the hall and living room, has two doors on left. Between these doors a dresser. On right wall a larger door which stands open, showing porch and landscape beyond. Lower down on right a porcelain stove with arm-chair in front of it. Spinning-wheel, cupboard, oak settee. On walls two large oil portraits of a lady and a gentleman. Table with three arm-chairs about it. Bornholme clock in corner. Sheepskins, horns and heads of sheep, blunderbuss, guitar, saddle, stock-whips, fishing rod and basket. Everything denoting the comfortable, well-provided home of prosperous farmer. The sunlight is streaming in through door and window.

When the scene opens a buxom young servant woman in Iceland costume is finishing the decoration of table in inner room. The faint sound of the shepherds' song comes down from the mountains. She listens and looks out at open window. A man crosses hurriedly.

GUDRUN.

C [Calling.] John! John Vidalin!

JOHN.

[Outside.] Helloa!

[Enter John, a farm servant.

R through fa

GUDRUN.

Master's coming, isn't he?

JOHN.

Yes, they're bringing him home. Listen! "Long live the Mountain-King!"

GUDRUN.

Made him Mountain-King, have they?

JOHN.

They have.

GUDRUN.

[*Coming down with flowers to table in outer room.*]
How his mother will be proud of him! *comes down steps*

JOHN.

She'll have a right to be that, Gudrun. In five years he has doubled the stock on her father's old farm.

GUDRUN.

And now they're taking him away from it!

JOHN.

[*Going to stove and building wood fire.*] So they are, worse luck—to weigh tallow and sample wool in the Factor's warehouses!

GUDRUN.

Don't talk about bad luck on a day like this. If Magnus is leaving the farm it's only because he's marrying the prettiest girl in Iceland and going to be partner in the biggest business in the South lands. *clearing table etc*

See that Gudrun & John speak out clear
The story begins immediately the curtain rises

JOHN.

Anybody could do that, Gudrun.

GUDRUN.

Pastor crossing
at back

It isn't "anybody" would have the chance, John Vidalin. There's not another young man in Iceland that a girl like Thora Neilsen would look at; and I do believe Magnus Stephensson would give up fifty farms for the touch of her little finger.

PASTOR.

[Crossing window.] Good morning, Gudrun!

The Pastor should
be very bright
expansive &
clear.

GUDRUN.

Good morning, Pastor!

Enter PASTOR with a letter in his hand.

R.

PASTOR.

Everything going on well here?

GUDRUN.

Quite well, thank you, sir.

PASTOR.

[Holding up his hands at decorations.] Beautiful! What a betrothal it will be! Not come down, I see?

JOHN.

The Master?

PASTOR.

The family from town—the two families to be made one by the crowning event of this happy day.

JOHN.

[*Looking out at door.*] No sign of them yet, Pasto .

PASTOR.

I left Magnus at the sheep-fold. He thought he might be late, so he sent me ahead with this letter for his brother.

GUDRUN.

His brother ?

JOHN.

[*Coming back.*] Oscar ?

GUDRUN.

[*Coming left of table.*] Has Oscar returned from England then ?

L.

PASTOR.

[*Putting letter in pocket, sitting right of table, taking out snuff-box.*] Oh, yes! He came back by the *Laura* on her last trip from Leith.

Sealed at
Table

GUDRUN.

When was that ?

~~PASTOR.~~

~~Five—six—days ago. Magnus himself only heard of it coming down the mountain this morning.~~

Pastor
7.20.00
(6.00)

JOHN.

So young Oscar is home from college at last !

THE PRODIGAL SON

ACT I

GUDRUN.

Quite a man by this time, and grown a beard, I'll be bound.

PASTOR.

Yes, changed beyond all recognition, they say, and carrying everything before him.

JOHN.

Still his father's golden-headed boy, I suppose?

R.

PASTOR.

To be very clearly
announced.

[*Taking snuff.*] He's everybody's golden-headed boy. Oscar Stephenson is one of those happy, sunny souls who are born with the power of winning people's hearts, whatever they do or say, or are, or are not. Such bounding spirit! Such impetuous blood! If such a man does well the world says, "How wonderful!" If ill, "How pitiful!" Nobody seems able to think anything but good of him, and from the beginning to the end of his life he is the spoilt child of fortune, the privileged pet of everybody!

JOHN.

That's Oscar Stephenson—always was, always will be!

GUDRUN.

He's a darling!

[*Sounds of horses galloping and the cracking of a whip.*]

VOICE.

[*Outside.*] Helloa! Helloa! Helloa!

JOHN.

[*Running to door.*] Magnus!

GUDRUN.

[*Running to window.*] No, it's—well, I declare, it's Thora Neilsen and Oscar himself!

[OSCAR and THORA gallop past window and pull up at porch. OSCAR leaps from saddle and lifts THORA from her horse. They are flushed, hot, and excited.]

Dear.

OSCAR.

[*Dashing in and shaking hands all round.*] John Vidalin, as I'm a living man! And Gudrun! And the Pastor!

Enter from gate right.

PASTOR.

[*Who has risen.*] Can it be possible? It is—
no,—

Play all his with a note of high spirits.

OSCAR.

Yes, it's the Prodigal, if that's what you mean.

PASTOR.

Welcome home! Welcome! Welcome!

OSCAR.

Thanks! A thousand thanks!

PASTOR.

And Thora?

THORA.

Good-morning, everybody!

[*Handshaking all round.* THORA still holds

her bridle. GUDRUN brings sugar. THORA feeds and pats pony.

OSCAR.

And how's the Pastor? No need to ask, though. Not turned a hair these five years!

PASTOR.

[Left of table, taking off hat, revealing a head perfectly bald.] Not turned a hair, you say—look at them!

OSCAR.

Gone? Well, death before dishonour, you know! And how's Gudrun? Filled out a little, eh? Just a little, hasn't she? Let me see—how many children since I went away? None! Not even a little one?

[Looks at JOHN, shakes his head, then laughs merrily; all laugh.]

PASTOR.

But, Oscar . . . I may call you Oscar still?

OSCAR.

Why not?

PASTOR.

Then where are the rest of your party?

OSCAR.

Trundling along, bless them—mother and Aunt Margaret in the Post, and the Governor and the Factor on the two old mares from Government House. So Thora and I put heels to our ponies and galloped

Bring her C.

Fell
the whole width of the Moss ~~Heath~~ Heath. Heels up, heads down, and bounding over the ruts like greyhounds! It was glorious! Never enjoyed anything so much in my life!

Bring Thora down stage

PASTOR.

And then the charming company, Oscar—your future sister-in-law!

OSCAR.

! sense of not understanding. Ah, certainly! That accounts for it.

THORA.

[*At door with pony.*] More sugar for Silvertop, Gudrun.

[*GUDRUN runs with sugar from table.*]

Thora is feeling a little confused

OSCAR.

Magnus isn't down from the mountains yet?

GUDRUN.

Not yet.

JOHN.

[*Taking pony.*] I'll take the ponies to the home-field and let him know you've come.

OSCAR.

Don't! When a man has been seven days sheep-gathering he's such a picture. Shall we take him by surprise, Thora?

THORA.

If you'd like to.

[JOHN goes off. GUDRUN into inner room.
THORA sits right of table, PASTOR left,
OSCAR walks to and fro, talking excitedly.

OSCAR.

My goodness, how everything in the old house speaks to one! This was grandfather Grim's place, Thora—my mother's father, you know—and when Magnus and I were boys and our own father was made Governor of Iceland, and wanted quiet in Government House, we used to be bowled off to the old man's farm to romp and riot.

PASTOR.

You did, too!

OSCAR.

Didn't we? And ever since then I seem to have been carrying every blessed thing in the place up and down the world with me. That portrait of the old dad, and this one of my mother—the guitar I strummed out my first tunes on, and this ridiculous old clock. . . . Do you know, Pastor, in my little den at Oxford I used to hear this old Bornholme clock ticking away as plainly as I hear it now!

PASTOR.

Just back from Oxford, aren't you, Oscar?

Seated ^{at} table at OSCAR.

No, I left Oxford two years ago. I'm at the College of Music now.

PASTOR.

The College of Music?

Take up the
guitar & strum
at it.

A slight sense
of his own
want of con-
-tinuity.

OSCAR.

That's so. I'm no good for the Church, no good for politics, and as for business I'm about the silliest beggar at a bargain that ever breathed out of an oyster-shell. Music is the only thing I'm fit for—and I'm not much fit for that either.

PASTOR.

You do yourself an injustice there, Oscar. Ever since you were a child you've made us conceive the highest hopes that you'll become a great musician.

clearly.

OSCAR.

Doesn't look much like it, Pastor.

Sealed ^{back} ~~on~~ table.

PASTOR.

Ah, but you'll gather your forces for a great effort some day and make a name that all the world will hear about. Your father expects it, Iceland expects it, and now that you are devoting yourself to music entirely, you must let nothing interfere with it—pleasure, travel, friendship, love—nothing! Don't you agree with me, Thora?

clearly.
Sealed at table.
He only means
that Oscar must
not fall in love
in England.

THORA.

[Unasily.] I—I suppose not, Pastor.

confused again -
blushing - the memory of
the ride.

OSCAR.

Are longa, vita brevis!

Rises

PASTOR.

[Rising.] True, and that's why it was so good of

you to break in on your studies and come home for your brother's betrothal.

OSCAR.

Can't say I did that, Pastor. To tell you the truth, I didn't know it was to come off until I arrived in Iceland.

PASTOR.

Then how lucky to come in the nick of time! Magnus will be delighted. And that reminds me [*fumbling in his pocket*]. He gave me a letter, and I'd nearly forgotten to deliver it.

OSCAR.

[*Taking letter.*] A letter from Magnus?

PASTOR.

I mustn't forget the Sheriff, though. He's at Parsonage engrossing the contract—the marriage contract, ^{Look at} ~~have~~ ^{water} you know—and I promised to warn him when the ^{front of} company were coming. Adieu for the present, ^{last} Thora!

THORA.

Adieu for the present, Pastor!

PASTOR.

Adieu to you, Oscar!

Oscar goes to R.

OSCAR.

[*Going up with her.*] Adieu! Adieu!

[*Exit PASTOR. OSCAR opens folded paper*

Oscar must show with the letter in hand the sense of a certain disloyalty to Magnus

and comes down reading it. Sits on table, back of THORA.

OSCAR.

[*Reading.*] "DEAR OSCAR,—Glad to hear you have come home again, and wish I could have been down to welcome you. You come in a good hour, for you must have heard of my good fortune with Thora. It was long before I could bring myself to grasp my happiness, because she was such a happy little girl and it seemed so selfish to take her away from her father's house, and everybody there so fond of her. But now that I've got her I'm so happy that nothing goes wrong with me, and I'm doing the work of three. Now I must conclude, for I am longing to see you and my dear girl as well, and it will take this letter all its time to come to your hands before I get there myself. Your affectionate brother—MAGNUS STEPHENSSON."

[*A moment's pause, both look confused and affected.*]

OSCAR.

Poor old Magnus! He's such a good fellow, isn't he.

THORA.

Isn't he?

OSCAR.

So straightforward and honourable!

THORA.

Indeed he is.

OSCAR.

So loyal and staunch and affectionate.

*read this
simply - with
little glances
aside & at
Thora.
Thora sits
Thora herself
must shut
himself in.
Thora sits.*

dash left.

*sits on table for
at front & it
Both are now try-
ing to excuse
themselves for their
disloyalty by
praising Magnus
lavishly.
sits on edge of table.*

THORA.

Yes, yes.

OSCAR.

Still it puzzles me how you and he came together. If anybody had told me five years ago that when I came back to Iceland Magnus and you would be on the point of being betrothed I couldn't have believed it.

THORA.

Nor I—then.

OSCAR.

Tell me how it happened.

THORA.

It was Aunt Margret who began it.

OSCAR.

Aunt Margret!

face front

THORA.

Simply - a little touch of comedy.

"Your father is growing old," she said, "and it's time he took a partner. Pity he hasn't a son for a place like that, but the next best thing is a son-in-law, and if you or your sister Helga would only marry somebody who could carry on the business——"

OSCAR.

Ah!

THORA.

"Somebody like Magnus——"

OSCAR.

And what did you say to that?

THORA.

I said, "Magnus is like my brother, Aunt Margaret." "So much the easier to make him your husband," said Auntie. "But surely it's necessary to love one's husband," I said. "Certainly it's necessary to love him," said Auntie. "Aren't we *all* taught to love one another?"

*Simply again -
with a touch of
comedy. Get in
ripple of
laughter.*

OSCAR.

And then?

THORA.

Then it was Helga or I. *(seriously)*

OSCAR.

I see!

Pass round table to Back

THORA.

And Helga was at college in Denmark. *(seriously)*

OSCAR.

Helga was at college in Denmark!

THORA.

She is still in Denmark.

(seriously)

OSCAR.

But Magnus?

THORA.

Magnus was loyal and staunch and affectionate.

OSCAR.

And so——

THORA.

So father and the Governor arranged everything. *(clearly - a sense
of helplessness)*

OSCAR.

[*In a quavering voice.*] But why did you consent? *has R*
If you didn't love Magnus—you didn't, did you?

THORA.

Not really, perhaps—not really and truly——

OSCAR.

[*Earnestly.*] Then why did you consent?

THORA.

There was my father——

OSCAR.

Thora

But surely you have to live your own life, Thora.
However obedient a daughter may be to her father
she is a separate being, and there comes a time when
she has to fly with her own wings. *and out*

THORA.

There was Magnus, too——

[*MAGNUS crosses window at back, looks in, smiles, nods to himself and comes on tip-toe to door as if intending to take the two by surprise. He has a dog with him and playfully signals it to stand back.*

OSCAR.

No doubt! I wouldn't say a word against Magnus
—God forbid! But love—mutual love—isn't that the
only basis of a true marriage, Thora? And if you do
not love, Magnus—not really and truly as you say—
why did you consent to marry him? *still more and out*

This love scene should grow more & more fervent with every line.

ACT I

THE PRODIGAL SON

17

[MAGNUS stops, his face changes, he reels and holds on to lintel with one hand and grips the dog by its collar with the other. THORA covers her face and sobs. OSCAR is carried away by her emotion.

How hateful of me to make you cry, Thora! [Getting closer.] I didn't intend to do that, dear. [Still closer.] But have you never asked yourself what will happen if you marry Magnus, and then find out, when it is too late, that—that you love somebody else?

[THORA makes an inarticulate murmur, rises from her chair and turns away. OSCAR follows her, losing all control of himself.

What did you say, Thora? Tell me, dear, tell me—did you say—you had found that out already?

THORA.

[Hysterically, swinging round to him.] You know I have, Oscar!

OSCAR.

Thora!

[Their hands meet and they stand face to face, with THORA'S face to the door. She sees MAGNUS and utters a low cry. The two fall apart, THORA left, OSCAR right; MAGNUS comes between them, with wild eyes, and breath coming in gusts.

MAGNUS.

[In choking voice.] What does this mean?

OSCAR.

[With an effort.] Magnus!

Thora at table
Oscar on her
right.

Jumping
Not an embrace.
Both hands
Clasped firmly.

A moment of dead si-
-lence. You almost
hear Magnus's bre-
-athing.
C. G. L.

B

MAGNUS.

[To THORA.] Only six days since I left you, and I find you like this!

OSCAR.

Magnus!

MAGNUS. C.

Speak! Can't you speak to me?

OSCAR. R.

Pause

It isn't Thora's fault, Magnus. It's mine—if it's anybody's—and if you've anything to say you must say it to me.

MAGNUS.

You! What are you I'd like to know? A man who betrays his own brother!

OSCAR.

[His anger rising.] Magnus!

MAGNUS.

Is that what you came home to do? In the name of God why didn't you stay where you were?

OSCAR.

[Struggling to control himself.] Magnus, you must not talk to me like that—you must not talk to me as if I had stolen Thora's affections away from you, because—

MAGNUS.

Then what have you done?

OSCAR.

Because Thora has never loved you—though I'm sorry to say it—especially now—very, very sorry—

MAGNUS.

Damn your sorrow! *Desks stick down. Turns L a step.*

OSCAR.

[*Blazing up.*] And damn your insolence! And if you won't hear the truth in sorrow then hear it in scorn— Thora's engagement to you is nothing but a miserable commercial bargain between her father and our father by which she has been bought and sold like a slave.

*Loudly.
vehemently.
almost indig-
nantly.*

MAGNUS.

[*Reeling under the blow.*] I—I know nothing about that. I only know that—that I was to marry Thora, and this—this very day we were to be betrothed.

*A pause. Then
a confused
mutter.*

THORA.

[*Tremulously.*] I was much to blame, but it wasn't altogether my fault, Magnus. It was all done by other people. I was really never asked—never consulted.

*going up to him.
pathetically.*

MAGNUS.

[*His voice breaking.*] But if you had told me you didn't wish it—you could not care for me—

THORA.

I didn't know at that time, Magnus.

*pathetically
turns round.*

MAGNUS. C.

You didn't know—?

THORA.

*pathetically,
softly*
[*Much moved.*] I didn't know that the love I felt for you was not the right love—that there was another kind of love altogether, and before a girl should bind herself to any one for better or for worse until death parts them, she should love him with all her heart and soul and strength.

L. in front of table.

MAGNUS.

softly
[*Coming up behind her.*] And do you know that kind of love now, Thora? . . . Do you?

Leaning over her.

THORA.

[*Faintly.*] Yes!

MAGNUS.

My God! [*Reeling a little, then recovering himself.*] So—so it's all over, and there's no help for it? . . . But if it's all over between Thora and me, what is to be done now? [*To THORA.*] Your father must have the contract ready by this time—can you ask him to destroy it? [*THORA turns away.*] You can't—I know you can't. He would never forgive you—never in this world! [*To OSCAR.*] The Governor has plans about the partnership in the Factor's business—can you fulfil them if I should fail? [*OSCAR drops his head.*] No? Then I suppose I must be the first to move. That's only right, perhaps, since I am the one who has to get out of the way.

Thora turns head aside

head turns R.

Struggling to be brave - to be a strong man, not to be crushed by the blow.

THORA. *Jakes step towards here.*
Don't say that, Magnus.

MAGNUS.

Why not? Better a sour truth than a sweet lie, Thora. But the old people will be here soon—go into this room. [*Crossing to lower door left.*] I have something to say to Oscar.

*Sharply, ab-
-mal. wrath.
-fully at first.*

THORA.

[*Passing into room.*] What are you going to do, at door L. Magnus?

MAGNUS.

God knows! He has got us into a knot. He has to get us out of it.

[*Exit THORA. OSCAR crosses left and sits right of table.*]

I want to ask you certain questions.

OSCAR.

Ask them. *Seated on arm of chair*

MAGNUS.

*sitting at-
-air at back
-table* If Thora were free would you wish to marry her?

OSCAR.

If she would have me—yes!

MAGNUS.

You said just now that love—*mutual* love—was the only basis of a true marriage. You love Thora?

*Play the first
part of this scene
as a sort of
fencing match.
Magnus sharp
& emphatic,
Oscar in a fight-
-ing mood.
Both looking
out towards*

*audience (not at each
other) standing right
& left of table*

OSCAR. *Rises*

I do.

MAGNUS.

Thora is a sweet, good girl, but she is a simple Iceland maiden who has never been out of her own country, while you have sailed and seen the world in many lands. Would your love bear the strain of such an unequal marriage?

Coming down to L. side of table.

OSCAR.

Why do you ask me a question like that?

MAGNUS.

[Firmly.] Would it?

OSCAR.

It would.

MAGNUS.

Thora is practically her father's only daughter now and he is old and very fond of her. If he should wish you to remain in Iceland would you be willing to stay here for the rest of your life?

OSCAR.

If he made it a condition—yes!

MAGNUS.

The Governor has plans for your future, and you have your own aims and ambitions also. If these should clash with your love for Thora would you be willing to give them up?

OSCAR.

Undoubtedly.

MAGNUS.

(Sharply facing towards Oscar)

You are sure of that?

OSCAR.

Sure of it—that is to say—if they tempted me ^{Rising} away from her—tempted me to leave her and go to ^(facing Magnus first - then shifting his gaze) England—

MAGNUS.

Or to any other country—or any other woman? ^{leans over (table)}

OSCAR.

That is not possible!

MAGNUS.

But if it were possible?

OSCAR.

I should not go.

MAGNUS.

Then you have counted all the cost—all the consequences?

OSCAR.

I know nothing of costs and consequences. I only know that I love Thora with all my heart and soul, and if she were free from this miserable contract in which she had no part I should consecrate my whole life to make her happy.

[MAGNUS takes up pen, ink, and writing materials from dresser and puts them on table before OSCAR.]

*impatience -
vehemently -
looking straight
out -
walking up
& down stage*

MAGNUS.

Then write that.

OSCAR.

Write it?

MAGNUS.

Write it, and I—I will give her the letter.

OSCAR.

[Rising.] You mean that, Magnus? That you *come back* will give her back her word, and find a way to break *to table* off this betrothal?

MAGNUS.

Write your letter.

OSCAR.

[Moved.] What a good fellow you are! ~~You make me feel as if I had behaved odiously and wish to heaven I had never come back. But if I have done wrong to you I can think of no better way of making amends than by placing my dearest interests in your hands.~~ I will write the letter, Magnus—and you shall please yourself whether you deliver it.

[OSCAR sits at table and writes rapidly.

MAGNUS goes over to chair before stove and sits with his face in his hands. The dogs creep about him.]

There! I think I've said all we talked about if less than a fraction of what I feel.

MAGNUS.

[Rising, taking letter and indicating upper room left.] Now go into my room and wait until I come to you.

OSCAR. *Goes towards him. C.*

Don't keep me in suspense. ~~God knows if Thora will consent, and even if she does there are the old people to think about. Nobody wants to see his schemes upset or contracts broken, and to persuade two old men who don't want to be persuaded~~

MAGNUS.

Wait! If I agree to break this contract and take the consequences there is something you owe me—you owe your silence.

Bring this out clearly - it is important.

OSCAR.

Assuredly.

MAGNUS.

What I do or say at the ceremony this afternoon you must never allow it to be seen that you know my object. Is it a promise?

OSCAR. *Back C.*

Oscar

Certainly! But when all's over and everything's settled what's to become of you?

MAGNUS. *sits in chair by stove. Magnus*

Who knows? Everybody has his own wounds to bandage.

OSCAR.

Upon my soul, Magnus, I don't know if I can accept your sacrifice. Perhaps the brave thing, the brotherly thing, when I found I loved the girl you were going to marry, would have been to stand back in silence. Yet I *had* to speak. It was fate and I could not do otherwise. But there's my letter. Do

Oscar is touched by Magnus's magnanimity & fights hard.

as you please with it. Destroy it if you like—nobody will know. Thora will never know—even I will never know. The betrothal will go on as intended and ~~nobody a penny the wiser.~~ And when all is over and she is your wife—

MAGNUS.

[*Down stage, visibly agitated.*] What then?

OSCAR.

Then I will take the first steamer back to England and neither you nor she shall ever see my face again.

[*Exit OSCAR into room. MAGNUS comes down to stove with letter in hand.* *He is rapidly up stairs*

MAGNUS.

"Do as you please with it. Destroy it if you like—nobody will know. . . ."

[*Holds the letter in both hands as if struggling with an impulse to destroy it. Then crosses to lower door left, crying in husky, agitated voice.*

Thora! Thora!

[*Re-enter THORA more composed.* *Comes to R.C.*

THORA.

I'm ashamed of what happened just now, Magnus, and I ask you to forgive and forget.

MAGNUS.

I cannot do either, Thora—not yet and in the way you mean.

THORA.

Don't be too hard on me, Magnus. I'm trying to

make amends and it isn't easy. Since I went into that room I've had time to think and now I see things differently. It wasn't my fault that I gave you my word, but I did give it, and I—I intend to keep it.

get this out
clearly - reso-
-lutely.

MAGNUS.

Will that be right, Thora?

THORA.

* It may not be right to Oscar perhaps—

MAGNUS.

I'm not thinking about Oscar now—will it be right to me? ~~You said awhile ago that before a girl should marry a man she ought to love him with all her heart and soul and strength.~~ Will it be right to marry me while you love somebody else like that?

Thora sees
things differently
now

THORA.

I'm only trying to do what is right, Magnus, and if you think it would be wrong to marry you I will never marry at all.

almost with a
cry of pain.

MAGNUS.

What good will that be to me, Thora? Five years, ten years, twenty years hence what good will it be to me that because you had given me your word and couldn't keep it, you are living out a lonely life somewhere?

Crosses L.

THORA.

Then what am I to do?

again the helpless
cry of pain.

MAGNUS.

Marry the man you love, Thora.

THORA.

[With amazement.] Magnus!

(breathlessly)
Thora
Magnus

MAGNUS.

[Giving letter.] Here is his letter.

THORA.

He gave it to you to deliver!

(astonishment)

MAGNUS.

I asked for it.

~~THORA.~~
~~And you came to speak for him?~~ (again)
~~MAGNUS.~~
~~I came to speak for myself as well.~~

THORA.

How good you are to me, Magnus!

(overwhelmed)

MAGNUS. C

Read your letter.

[THORA crosses right, opens and reads letter.

MAGNUS stands by table watching her anxiously. Her face shines with happiness. His saddens and breaks.

THORA. R.

How splendid! How noble! That's what I do call

(joyously - a little selfishness in her joy, not thinking of Magnus's sufferings)

brotherly ! Oscar tells me you think you can put aside the contract. You are too good—too generous !

[She kisses letter and puts it in her breast.]

MAGNUS.

§.

Now you must answer it.

THORA.

R

Not yet—not immediately.

MAGNUS.

C.

[Leading her to table.] Immediately ! The family will be here presently, and if Oscar does not receive your answer before the time fixed for the betrothal he will take the first ship back to England.

Did he say that ?

THORA.

mag. leads her across to table.

MAGNUS.

Yes. Write your answer.

Holds out pen

THORA.

I cannot ! Your goodness and kindness have driven everything out of my head.

Thora sits

MAGNUS.

Then write to my dictation.

[She sits right of table, takes up pen, wipes her eyes and writes—MAGNUS back of table dictating.]

“MY DEAR OSCAR,—I received the letter you sent by Magnus——”

THORA.

[*Writing.*] "Sent by Magnus——"

MAGNUS.

"And believe you love me dearly——"

THORA.

"——dearly——"

MAGNUS.

"And will never allow anything or anybody to come between us——"

THORA.

——"come between us——"

MAGNUS.

"Magnus has given me back my word, because I do not love him——"

THORA.

Must I say that, Magnus?

MAGNUS.

"And because he wishes to make me happy——"

THORA.

[*Breaking down.*] I cannot. I really cannot.

MAGNUS.

Go on, Thora.

THORA.

You will break my heart, Magnus.

MAGNUS.

"Therefore if he can satisfy my father and yours at the ceremony, I will marry you when and where you please, because——"

The vibrating
tremulous voice
can hardly
support itself.

THORA.

[Sobbing.]—"because——"

MAGNUS.

"Because I love you with all my heart and soul and strength."

[THORA is wiping her eyes.]

Sign it. . . . Seal it. . . . Address it! . . .
Now give it to me!

(Go)
Thora

[He takes up letter and comes down right. gives up C.]

THORA.

at for if [Rising.] Stop! You are heaping coals of fire on
this L my head and I cannot bear it. Give me back my
letter.

MAGNUS.

It's either your happiness or mine for it now,
Thora.

At this moment
Thora's manner
should change.
The gentle, pas-
sive creature
should become
vehement and
passionate.

THORA.

[Taking OSCAR's letter from her breast and trying to thrust it on MAGNUS.] Here, return him his own—say there is no answer.

MAGNUS.

Impossible!

THORA.

Give it me! Give it me!

(Go)

MAGNUS.

No, no, no!

[She flings herself upon him, both arms about his neck. He struggles with an impulse to embrace her, conquers it and breaks out of her arms and flees through the door. THORA stands a moment where he has left her, breathless and dazed. Then in the silence comes the blowing of a horn, followed by sounds of wheels and bells. GUDRUN comes running from within.]

GUDRUN.

The Mistress and Margret Neilson!

at door on R.

[The Post, a canvas-covered waggon drawn by ponies, crosses window and draws up at porch. ANNA and MARGRET in bright summer bonnets seen inside. JOHN hurries up. Servants shake hands with ANNA and help her to alight. All happy movement and noise. AUNT MARGRET comes in scolding Driver, and shaking her parasol at him.]

Post.

Here we are, ladies.

AUNT MARGRET.

Oh, here we are, are we? Sure you've not made a mistake? Six mortal hours on the way as I'm a living woman! Did you think it was a funeral you were coming to, Postman?

Post.

No, ma'am ; nor I didn't think it was a fire neither.

AUNT MARGRET.

Good thing it wasn't, my man, or there wouldn't be a cinder left by this time.

ANNA.

[To JOHN, who has taken travelling bags from waggon.]
Take that into Thora's room, and this into mine, John.

JOHN.

Yes, ma'am.

[JOHN takes one bag to lower down left, and goes out with others through inner room, GUDEBRUN following with wraps. THORA, trying to compose herself, turns to receive old ladies. AUNT MARGRET sits right of table, THORA stands in front of it ; ANNA moves about room.]

AUNT MARGRET.

So we've overtaken you at last, you naughty thing !

ANNA.

[Laughing.] Don't take any notice of your cross old auntie, Thora. Ever since you and Oscar rode away from us—



Aunt M.

AUNT MARGRET.

Why *did* she ride away from us, I should like to know ?

C

Talking off things etc - saying as if at home.

34

THE PRODIGAL SON

ACT I

ANNA.

What a nonsensical question! When a girl hasn't set eyes on her sweetheart for seven long days, isn't it natural she should be in a hurry to see him?

AUNT MARGRET.

Fiddlesticks! Don't try to fool an old fox, Anna dear. It wasn't because she was dying to see Magnus that she cut away from us, but because somebody else was going to ride off with her.

THORA. *L.*

[*Dropping her head.*] Auntie!

AUNT MARGRET.

Oh, you needn't colour up like fire, my precious. I know it's the truth without that.

ANNA. *Coming towards table.*

How absurd you are, Margret Neilsen! Even if the children did want to gallop off together instead of creeping along with two old creatures like us, where's the harm that has been done?

AUNT MARGRET.

Oh, don't ask me where's the harm—a little brook can start a big river!

ANNA.

Besides, you forget that Oscar is Magnus's own brother.

AUNT MARGRET.

So was Jacob the brother of Esau, and Cain was the brother of Abel; and those ten big beauties were the brothers of Joseph and Benjamin!

Boldly, clearly
every time Aunt
M. pulls the
trigger the shot
should go.

ANNA. *Coming down to table.*

[*Laughing.*] Gracious me, Margret Neilsen, what a bad disposition you've got! That's the worst of you, Margret—you've got such a bad disposition! You talk about Oscar as if he were a regular scapegrace instead of my own son and the dearest boy in the world.

goes to table
by Steve R.

AUNT MARGRET.

It's easy to defend somebody whom nobody wants to strike—I say nothing against Oscar.

ANNA.

Of course you don't, you cross old creature. You're fonder of him than anybody else, and I do believe you're only vexed with Thora because you wanted to keep Oscar to yourself, you jealous thing.

AUNT MARGRET.

Many things glitter in the goldsmith's shop, but a sensible woman doesn't want to grab the whole of them.

ANNA.

And does Thora, you silly?

AUNT MARGRET.

It looks as if she did. She's to be married to

Magnus, yet ever since Oscar came home she's been with him every hour of the day.

ANNA.

That's exactly what Magnus would have wished, being away at the sheep-gathering, and not able to look after the child himself.

AUNT MARGRET.

The more fool he! The man who is going to marry a girl and wants his brother to look after her while he is away is a fool, and his friends ought to take care of him. Two dogs at a bone seldom agree!

ANNA.

[*Laughing.*] Margret Neilsen, what names you are calling the children!

AUNT MARGRET.

Then don't tell me Magnus could have wished it. I know the men better than that, bless 'em!

ANNA. *Comes down to table*

Yes, indeed, you know such a lot about the men, I wonder you never married yourself, dearest.

AUNT MARGRET.

That's *why*, my precious!

ANNA.

Ah well, this is what it is to be old, you see. When people are young their hearts make their own sunshine.

AUNT MARGRET.

Yes, and moonshine too, Anna dear.

ANNA. *Going up C. at foot of steps*

[*To THORA.*] Don't bother about this nonsensical old woman, Thora, but go to your room and dress. The gentlemen will be here presently, and they'll want to go on with the betrothal immediately. *Been* Crying? I know! I cried myself when I went through the same thing long ago. [*Going up.*] Ah, a woman has only two days in her life that are her own—her very own—and her wedding-day is one of them.

Thora has been crying as her face shows.

AUNT MARGRET.

And what is the other one, Anna Magnusson?

ANNA.

[*On step at back.*] The other one is too far away for Thora to think of it yet, bless her! *Exit E. at back*

[*Exit ANNA.* AUNT MARGRET *wipes her eyes furtively and comes down to THORA.*

AUNT MARGRET.

Aren't you going to kiss your cross old auntie, dear? [*THORA kisses her.*] Now let's go and put on your kirtle. [*They move towards lower door left.*] But just take a cranky old woman's advice and don't make trouble between two brothers. Magnus may not be as clever as his brother, but he is just as able to take care of a girl and quite as likely to make her happy.

(kindly) crossing to L. for exit.

Then your father and the Governor have set their hearts on this marriage, and if anything should happen—— [*Sounds of horses' hoofs and men's laughter.*] Here they come! They'll expect us to be ready—quick, quick!

[*She hurries THORA into room, and follows her as two ponies cross window walking, with GOVERNOR and FACTOR laughing and talking.* L.

FACTOR.

[*Speaking as they cross.*] Then that's settled, Governor?

GOVERNOR.

Yes, that's settled, Factor.

[*They alight.* PASTOR, now in gown and ruff, meets them. JOHN comes from right, GUDRUN from within. General greetings.

A joyful,
hilarious entrance.

GOVERNOR.

Everybody arrived, Gudrun?

GUDRUN.

Yes, sir. All in their bedrooms dressing.

GOVERNOR.

Then we'll drink a bottle of wine and rest till they're ready.

[*JOHN takes ponies, GUDRUN brings wine and glasses. GOVERNOR sits right of table, FACTOR left, PASTOR back.*

PASTOR.

Well, you *have* taken us by surprise, gentlemen.

GOVERNOR.

Surprise?

PASTOR.

With this betrothal, I mean.

FACTOR.

What could be more natural? The Governor and I are lifelong friends, aren't we?

PASTOR.

Yes, certainly! But Magnus! I didn't suppose he ever thought about anything but four-crops and lambs and wethers. And to think of Magnus making a match——

GOVERNOR.

Oh that!

FACTOR.

We knew how to manage *that*, didn't we, old friend?

GOVERNOR.

Yes, yes, we ~~knew~~ how to manage *that*!

[*They laugh, nod, and wink at each other, pouring out wine and jingling glasses.*]

FACTOR.

It was this way, you see. One day our Margret

Pastor
[]

Gov.
[]

Factor
[]

told me something that Magnus had been saying about what he would do with my business. "There's sense in that," thinks I. So over I went to Government House to call on the Governor.

GOVERNOR.

You did, old friend, you did!

FACTOR.

"Upon my word, Stephen, that son of yours is no fool," I says. ~~"But broad thighs want broad breeches and the question is what are we going to do with him?"~~

GOVERNOR.

And I said, "Lend him some money and give him a chance, Factor."

FACTOR.

~~"And create a rival to crush me? No, no," says I. "Near is my shirt but nearer is my skin. But look here, old friend, why shouldn't Magnus marry Thora?"~~

GOVERNOR.

"Splendid! Glorious! The very thing," I said. "It has been the dream of my life to cement our friendship by a still closer tie."

FACTOR.

So we came down to facts and figures and the matter was settled in half an hour.

GOVERNOR.

[*Jingling glasses.*] Your health, old friend!

FACTOR.

And yours!

PASTOR.

But the young people—what a surprise for them, though!

GOVERNOR.

I don't know about that, but we've got a surprise for them now—eh Factor?

PASTOR.

Another surprise?

GOVERNOR.

That's so! ~~We've been thinking it out as we rode up from Reykjavik.~~

FACTOR.

Perhaps you wouldn't believe it but I hold with young people enjoying their youth while they've got any. I managed to miss mine somehow—and it's been work, work, work with me all my days. The same with the Governor, it's been work, work, work with him, and we haven't had a holiday between us. But we're going to have a holiday now.

GOVERNOR.

Yes, we're going to see the world in our old age,

the Factor and I, but it's got to be with eyes that are better than ours are now—the eyes of our children, God bless them!

PASTOR.

So you intend to give the young couple a wedding trip abroad, do you?

FACTOR.

We do—England, France, Italy, Switzerland——

GOVERNOR.

London, Paris, Rome, Nice, Monte Carlo——

PASTOR.

[*Lifting his hands.*] Monte Carlo! Aren't you afraid, gentlemen—afraid of those whited sepulchres of the gay world? Don't you think the moral foundation of the young people may be undermined in those gilded communities, ~~so full of hollowness and rottenness?~~ ~~Have you trust them on the streets, see where so many have been wrecked?~~

FACTOR.

[*Laughing.*] Think of Thora in “the whited sepulchres,” of the “gay world!”

John C. H. alive.

GOVERNOR.

[*Laughing.*] And think of Magnus's “moral foundation” being undermined at Monte Carlo!

[*GOVERNOR and FACTOR are laughing merrily when ANNA, dressed for the ceremony, comes back from inner room and lights stove.*

Comes down steps to stove

FACTOR.

Here's Anna, as fresh and young as ever! Upon my soul, Stephen, it's only like yesterday we were doing all this for Anna herself.

AUNT MARGRET *re-enters, also dressed for ceremony.*

GOVERNOR.

And here's Margret! All days don't come on the same date—we must get ready for her next.

FACTOR.

For our Margret! She'll have to be quick or she'll be late then—people don't hatch many chickens at Christmas.

AUNT MARGRET.

Late indeed! If I couldn't catch up to you folks with your pair of chicks apiece I shouldn't think it worth while to begin.

ANNA.

[*Rising from fire.*] Well, two would be enough for me, if I could only keep them. But that's the worst of children—they marry and leave you.

FACTOR.

It depends on circumstances Anna—the marriage contract, eh, old friend?

[GOVERNOR and FACTOR nod and laugh again as the SHERIFF enters.

R.

Keep a sense
of happy move-
ment right
through this
scene. The
atmosphere of
a cheerful,
happy family
circle.

Crosses to R.

Anna's
to be the
one who
marries
the Sheriff.

PASTOR.

Well, here comes the Sheriff with the contract written and ready.

SHERIFF. *All use from table*

Yes, here are the documents, gentlemen, all in perfect order.

PASTOR.

Aha, a rich man's child needs a careful christening, it seems.

SHERIFF.

You're right, Pastor. It has taken me a good hour to engross this contract, and Oscar himself couldn't have written it quicker.

ANNA.

Closing door at R.

[*Closing door, &c.*] Here is Oscar.

[*Enter OSCAR, dressed, flushed, and excited.*

OSCAR.

*Oscar should
have been rather
difficultly done
if possible*

Sorry to be late, but I've raced Magnus, you see.

[*Takes Anna by arm and comes down.*

PASTOR.

Magnus has raced you in other things, my boy—in getting a wife, for instance.

ANNA.

Oscar mustn't dream of leaving me yet, Pastor. Besides, he has his work to think about—his career, his music.

PASTOR.

Time enough for everything, Anna—the Factor has another daughter.

FACTOR.

What if he has? When a man is an artist he may have many masters, but only one mistress.

OSCAR.

[Putting ANNA in chair by stove, his arms about her neck and kissing her.] And only one mother, you know.

[THORA re-enters in bridal costume. L.

GOVERNOR.

Here she is at last! [Embracing her.] But how pale, my child!

AUNT MARGRET.

You may well say so, Governor—she's been crying all the time I've been dressing her.

[OSCAR takes THORA and they go up talking earnestly. SHERIFF opens papers. PASTOR and FACTOR bring down chairs.

FACTOR.

I never can understand why a woman must always cry when she's going to be married—it's such a bad compliment to her new husband.

AUNT MARGRET.

As good as he deserves though—generally.

GOVERNOR.

I agree with Margaret. If ever there was a time for tears it's just at that moment of life when a girl is taking her first great leap into the dark.

PASTOR.

And I agree with the Governor. When I see a girl weeping so bitterly at the altar that she can hardly utter the responses I know she's going to be a happy bride.

PASTOR.

Well, here's the bride—where's the bridegroom?

GOVERNOR.

Dressing up in his best bib and tucker, I'll be bound.

AUNT MARGRET.

Who can blame him? You wouldn't have him wear poor clothes when he's making such rich pockets.

ANNA.

Oscar, where is Magnus?

MAGNUS.

[*Entering.*] I'm here, mother.

[*He is dressed as he went out, but still more untidy and dishevelled. The company look at him in surprise and utter exclamations of disappointment.*]

L from his own room.

FACTOR.

ent. H. Magnus. [Testily.] Well, well, let us get to work and have it over.
o you allow of this? [The company seat themselves. SHERIFF back
eris Dear sitting beside of table; GOVERNOR and PASTOR left of it;
Thora. FACTOR, OSCAR, THORA, and AUNT MARGRET
ag. Don't disturb him. *to the right of it. MAGNUS on spinning-stool*
his is good enough *next to ANNA, who sits on a chair by stove.*
or me.

PASTOR.

Hush! Hush!

SHERIFF.

[Reading.] "Whereas, it is faithfully and honourably intended that Magnus Stephenson, eldest son of Stephen Magnusson, Governor-General of Iceland, and Thora Neilsen, eldest daughter of Oscar Neilsen (commonly called Factor Neilsen), merchant of Reykjavik, shall be joined together in holy wedlock, it is hereby agreed and contracted—

"One—That the said Magnus Stephenson, after his marriage with the said Thora Neilson, shall always reside in Iceland."

Sheriff should read in the land sing-song usual under such circumstances.

VOICES.

Fair! Only fair!

SHERIFF.

"Two—That the said Magnus Stephenson on his marriage with the said Thora Neilsen shall be taken into partnership with the said Factor Neilsen and be granted a third share of the profits of the business."

(50.)

VOICES.

Good! Very good!

SHERIFF.

"Three—That in the event of the death of the said Factor Neilsen during the lifetime of the said Thora Neilsen, she shall inherit one half of all the property of which he dies possessed, leaving the remainder to be disposed of in the interest of his other daughter, Helga Neilsen, now in Denmark, as he may hereafter will and determine."

VOICES.

Generous! Most generous!

SHERIFF.

quitting
"As witness the hands of the said parties and their parents conjointly the day and year——"

VOICES.

Splendid! Really splendid!

GOVERNOR.

general chorus of happy voices
[*Shaking hands with FACTOR across table.*] Just like you, old friend!

FACTOR.

[*Rising and imitating manner of auctioneer.*] Nobody bid higher? Then going—going——

GOVERNOR. & Factor sit.

Wait! Let us ask the opinion of the young people. A cow seldom kicks when you're carrying her clover, but still—just a matter of form, old friend!

FACTOR.

Very well! Thora, what do you say?

In this scene both Thora & Oscar should keep their eyes on Magnus - as if giving him a chance to change his mind if he wants to - as well as anxious to know what he is doing.

ACT I

THE PRODIGAL SON

49

THORA.

[*Nervously.*] Hadn't you better ask Magnus first, father?

FACTOR.

Certainly—Magnus first, then. What do you say, Magnus? How do you like the contract?

MAGNUS. *Rises*

[*After a pause, rising.*] I don't like it at all, Factor, and I cannot sign it.

[*Sensation.* THORA rises, OSCAR draws her down again.

FACTOR. *Rises*

Is that so? I thought I knew something of these little matters, but if you can draw up a better document—

a little nettled

GOVERNOR. *Stands*

Some trifle, no doubt! Magnus will explain. What is the point you object to, my son?

Sits

*plausibly.
presenting
himself.*

MAGNUS.

According to this contract I am required to live in Iceland all my life. That's slavery—I will not submit to it.

Gov. sits

ANNA.

But, my dear Magnus, don't you see the reason for that? The Factor has only two children and one of them is away. Helga is like Oscar, she is going to be a musician, and that means she must spend most of her life abroad. Therefore, Thora is practically the

D

Factor's only daughter—his only child—and if she goes away from Iceland who is to cheer him up and make home bright for him? Be reasonable, Magnus!

FACTOR.

(a little bitterly)

Anna, hadn't we better let the young man finish? He may have other objections. Have you?

MAGNUS.

R.

Yes. According to this contract I am to be taken into partnership but only on a third share. Partnership is partnership, and where there are two partners it should be half and half—I must have half.

[*Astonishment. Again THORA rises and OSCAR draws her down.*]

FACTOR.

(cynically) [Laughing bitterly.] Why not? Everything is hay in hard weather. I'm so hard up for a son-in-law that I shouldn't stick at a trifle. I thought if I allowed you to come into the business I had created, and to work it with my plant and capital, one third was generous.

GOVERNOR.

Most generous!

FACTOR.

[*Witheringly.*] But why shouldn't I go farther? Why shouldn't I give away the loaf and then beg the crust?

GOVERNOR.

Magnus, the Factor is treating you with boundless liberality; but no well is so deep that it cannot be emptied, and if you go any farther——

FACTOR.

Why shouldn't he? It isn't fair play between the wind and straw, but why shouldn't he beat me about a little more? Anything else to ask, sir?

*withering leaf
again.*

MAGNUS.

Yes! By this contract my wife is to inherit half her father's fortune at his death—she must inherit the whole of it.

VOICES.

Good Lord!

GOVERNOR.

Magnus, are you dreaming? Do you forget that the Factor has another daughter?

Rises

MAGNUS.

No, sir. But she is away. As mother says, she may spend most of her life abroad. And if my wife is to be compelled to pass her life by her father's side—cheering him up and making home bright for him—is somebody else, who has done nothing, to sweep off half of all he leaves behind? No! My wife—if I marry—must have everything!

*(Magnus is quite
unmoved by the
blast of con-
-demnation & goes
a more & more
firmly.)*

Gov. Sils

FACTOR.

And so these are the only terms on which you will do me the honour to marry my daughter?

(cynically)

MAGNUS.

[*Sullenly.*] Yes.

[*General murmurs of condemnation.* THORA drops her head into AUNT MARGRET'S breast.

AUNT MARGRET.

Well, I *am* deceived in Magnus! But there's not much pleasure in playing with the head of a mad bull—better get to the other side of the hedge, it seems to me.

ANNA. *Going over to Mag.*

*Pathetically,
tenderly,
pleadingly.*

My son, my dear son, you haven't thought of things in the right way, or you couldn't do what you are doing. ~~For my part I don't like these marriage contracts at all. It seems like a tempting of Providence to talk about money and business just when two souls who love one another are joining themselves together and becoming one. But you are making it worse, Magnus—you are making it a common bargain. And then~~ Think of Thora. If you refuse her father's offer everybody will hear of it, and the poor girl will be shamed. Come now, for Thora's sake, even if you don't quite like the Factor's conditions—for Thora's sake, Magnus—will you not?

MAGNUS.

[*After an effort, in a quavering voice.*] No!

VOICES.

Infamous! Hateful!

Anna rise + get back.
[OSCAR rises and goes up stage.]

GOVERNOR.

[*Rising, mopping his forehead.*] Don't go away, Oscar. I know you must be disgusted with your brother's conduct, but I want you to speak to him for all that.

Play this scene of the Governor's appeal to Oscar for all it is worth.

OSCAR. C.

[*Deeply agitated.*] Forgive me, I cannot do that, father. It is impossible.

GOVERNOR.

Ah, I know your affectionate nature, Oscar, but you must not be silent from any mistaken tenderness to one so hard and obstinate. Speak to him. He is making a breach between two families by asking these utterly impossible terms. And all for what? Only to indulge his greed—his sordid selfishness!

OSCAR.

[*Still at back.*] Don't say that, father. We've known Magnus all his life, and never to this day have we seen a selfish thought in his heart--never!

GOVERNOR.

Then we see it now, God help us! ~~Speak to him, Oscar. Tell him if he adheres to the attitude he has taken up he will be an object of hatred and contempt.~~ Speak to your brother, Oscar; for the honour of the family, speak to him.

OSCAR.

[*Coming down.*] I don't feel that I have any right, sir—any right or any excuse. Magnus knows better than we do what he is doing and he must have counted all the consequences.

[GOVERNOR groans and sits. OSCAR comes down right by THORA.]

But if . . . if I cannot speak to Magnus there is something I can do—I can offer to take his place.

All rise.

only I have (besides Oscar) know what motives inspire Magnus, who must show her pain at thought of it.

pleadingly, powerfully.

ANNA.

Oscar!

OSCAR.

all sit again

If you and the Factor will consent I will accept the conditions of the contract just as they are and be only too proud to marry Thora if she will accept me.

VOICES.

Splendid! The very thing!

GOVERNOR.

[*Wiping his eyes.*] Just like Oscar! Always doing the great thing! But I cannot allow a momentary impulse of generosity——

OSCAR.

It isn't the great thing, father, and it isn't a momentary impulse either. Since I came home from England I have learnt to love Thora, and if it is understood that Magnus refuses—that is to say no longer wishes—to marry her——

FACTOR.

That's so—undoubtedly so!

OSCAR.

[*Looking steadfastly at MAGNUS.*] If that is understood—quite understood—[*MAGNUS gives no sign.*] and if Thora will take me instead——

[*THORA lifts her head, rises, and holds out her hand. OSCAR takes it eagerly, amid general chorus of joyful exclamations.*]

FACTOR.

What do you say to that, Stephen?

GOVERNOR.

I say it's fast ambling—too fast—but if the young people are satisfied, and Oscar is content to give up his career in England—his music, his profession—and take up your own business——

OSCAR.

I am, father, for Thora's sake, I am!

FACTOR. Goes to Oscar C.

[*Excitedly slapping him on the back.*] Then so be it, godson! Sheriff, alter the names in that contract and let it be signed without delay. O: Th: up stage

[*General movement. FACTOR crosses to MAGNUS, who stands with impassive face.*]

As for you, sir, you thought to corner me, but there's nothing I like better than to dish a man who tries to dish me. Grasp all, lose all; your selfishness has done the work everybody wanted, and I'll go to bed a happy man to-night! Ha, ha, ha!

THORA. Comes to Factor

[*Trying to come between.*] Father ——!

FACTOR.

You get away, Thora. If a daughter of mine had

get.

done what he has tried to do to-day she wouldn't have a roof to cover her!

GOVERNOR. *Crosses to C.*

Neither shall a son of mine—not in my house at all events! Magnus Stephensson—

OSCAR. *Comes C.*

[*Intervening.*] Father! For mercy's sake—

GOVERNOR.

[*Brushing him aside.*] Hold your tongue, Oscar. Magnus Stephensson, understand that you remain here at the farm for the rest of your days, and thank your stars you are allowed to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow.

SHERIFF.

[*At table.*] The amended contract is ready for the signatures.

[*Joyful shouts of company.* OSCAR, THORA, GOVERNOR and FACTOR sign, SHERIFF witnessing. Meanwhile there comes from without the sound of a guitar, followed by a procession of children, gaily dressed, crossing the window. ANNA opens door and children troop in, bringing bouquets, which they offer to THORA. She takes them and hands them to ANNA and AUNT MARGRET, who fill their aprons with the flowers. The children, with girl playing guitar, pass up to inner room, upon which the sun is now setting in a warm red glow.

Sign in order - Thora Dear Gov: Factor

*Pastor removes chair
During this happy time
which should have
passed, Magnus ought
to stand by side,
looking straight out
towards audience, with
an impassive expression.*

GUDRUN.

[On step.] Supper is ready!

[With happy chatter all go up to inner room, except MAGNUS, who continues to stand by stove, unregarded and unobserved. The curtains are drawn across opening, darkening the front room. The buzz of conversation, with joyous peals of laughter, come from within, mingled with the music of the guitar. There is a moment's silence and THORA comes through curtains, very nervous and near to tears. She steps down to MAGNUS, who is conscious of her presence but does not move.]

Gudrun closes
curtains

Magnus!

THORA.

Thora!

MAGNUS.

THORA.

Oscar told me I was not to speak whatever happened, but it seemed so terrible that you should turn appearances against yourself like that——

Thora should play
this scene as if on the
very edge of tears.
Magnus should be very
tender with Thora —
a contrast to her
manner in
previous scenes.

MAGNUS.

We had made a mistake and had to get out of it somehow.

THORA.

I know. And of course I think it will be all for the best in the long run. You would have had no

joy of me, Magnus, and perhaps I should have been very unhappy. But that you should allow everybody to believe you were only thinking of the money when you were really thinking of me——

MAGNUS.

It's all over—let us say no more about it, Thora.

THORA.

[*With emotion.*] I—I feel as if I were losing a friend, Magnus—a brave, true friend, who would have done anything in the world for me.

MAGNUS.

Go to your happiness, my child.

THORA.

Won't you kiss me good-bye, Magnus—just for the last time, you know?

[*He turns. She holds up her face to him. He gathers her in his arms and kisses her on the forehead.*]

MAGNUS.

[*With strong emotion.*] Good-bye, little girl, and God bless you, and make you very happy. But if you ever want me say "Come," and I'll come to you—if it's to the farthest corner of the earth.

[*They separate. The buzz of conversation comes again.*]

OSCAR'S VOICE.

Thora! Thora!

[OSCAR comes through curtains, sees MAGNUS and steps down. THORA goes up and into inner room.]

OSCAR. Come down steps C.

Magnus, now that we are alone, you must let me thank you for what you did for Thora and me. It was too generous, too brotherly, and we can never be sufficiently grateful—never!

[MAGNUS turns aside, his face white and twitching.]

But it was horrible to hear you howled at like that. You pledged me to say nothing, and you were right, plainly right, though it made me feel like a coward and a hypocrite, tempting and condemning me to silence.

[MAGNUS is breathing heavily and struggling to control himself.]

If it hadn't been for the fear of involving Thora I couldn't have borne it,—upon my soul I could not! But I cannot allow the error about your motive to go much farther. As soon as it is safe to speak to the Factor and the Governor I will set you right. People shall know the truth about what you did, and why you did it, and they shall make amend and atone to you for everything.

MAGNUS.

[Turning fiercely upon OSCAR and taking some steps to left.] I don't care a straw what people think I did it for, and I don't care a damn if they never make amends. You know what I did it for, and that is enough for me. I did it for the sake of Thora. I gave her up to you that you might love her and

Magnus should not express the whole agony of soul which the previous incidents of the Act have engendered.

almost losing himself in his rising wrath
 cherish her and be a better husband than I could be. But if you ever neglect her, or desert her, or give her up for another woman, I'll take her back—do you hear me?—I'll take her back—and then—then, by God I'll—I'll kill you!

OSCAR.

[*Flaming up.*] Magnus!

Oscar, as if saying, "Let us settle it now."

[*There is silence for a moment while the brothers stand face to face and eye to eye. Then ANNA'S voice comes from within crying "OSCAR!" OSCAR listens and falls back.*

ANNA.

[*Coming through curtains.*] Oscar, where are you?

[*She looks from one to the other. OSCAR goes up to her.*

OSCAR.

[*Taking her hand, putting his arm about her neck and leading her up.*] Mother!

Oscar must show his craven spirit here. Only the sound of his mother's voice, & the presence of his mother, should seem to prevent an open & instant quarrel.
 [OSCAR and ANNA go through curtains—ANNA taking a lingering look back at MAGNUS. MAGNUS stands until they are gone, then staggers a pace forward and sinks into chair, with his face to the stove. There is no light in the room except the glow from the wood fire. Children's voices come from within singing the betrothal song—"Two Roses of Love."

[*Darkness falls and the inner room appears in a tableau. THORA is seen in a high-backed chair which is covered with flowers. OSCAR stands beside her. There is an empty*

Anna should see that the brothers are on the point of quarrelling (as seems to be her natural - & hence she came out) & she must suggest in silence the desire to make peace between them.

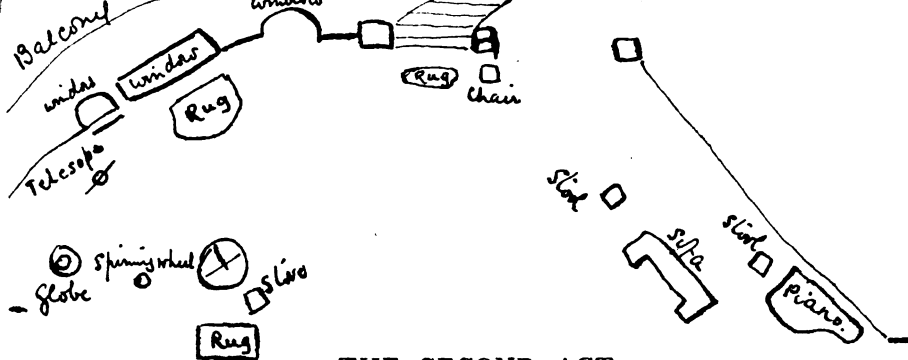
chair facing them, back to audience. The company about the table are raising their glasses to the bride, amid a buzz of merry voices.

[The singing continues; tableau fades; stage lightens and MAGNUS is seen huddled up in the chair before the dying fire, with one of the dogs licking the hand that covers his face.]

If further pictures are called for I suggest 2 -

1. Magnus at door, passing out or either looking back or (better) listening to the sounds of the happier company within.

2. Magnus gone. The betrothal party in front room, now fully lit up. Old people on steps, back & left. Girl with guitar sitting on edge of table. Oscar & Thora in middle of flowers, & children dancing & singing round them. A very bright, happy scene.



THE SECOND ACT

SCENE represents the interior of Government House, Iceland. A spacious garden-room. The half of right side is a circular glass front with large folding-door. Outside the glass front a verandah. Beyond verandah the quay, on which people are seen passing to and fro, and in the background the Fiord, with steamer at anchor, and mountains in distance. On left side of room a door to dining-room. Lower down left a grand piano. At back a wide opening to hall, in which staircase can be seen. Ottoman on right down stage, with Dutch spinning-wheel in front; a sofa on left by piano; basket-chair above folding-door. Small round table in middle of floor with vase for flowers. Chairs right and left of it. Large telescope, globes, &c. A bear's head with crossed spears, wolf's head with gun, fox's head with bow and arrow hang on walls back and left. The whole effect is of good taste, comfort, affluence, and some dignity.

When the curtain rises two maid-servants are coming and going between Dining-Room and Hall, carrying empty dishes and bringing in fruit. Jingling of glasses and cries of "Oscar!" come from within; then OSCAR is heard replying to a toast.

OSCAR.

[*Within.*] Thanks, hearty thanks! Thanks for your welcome home after our long and delightful honeymoon! I thank you on my wife's behalf and on my own; but not least on behalf of Helga [*jingling of glasses and applause*], our lovely Helga, who has come back from college in Denmark more charming and beautiful than ever, taking all our hearts by storm.

[*Renewed applause, in the midst of which THORA, looking pale and weak, comes out of Dining-Room, assisted by ANNA.*

THORA.

It's nothing. I'm quite well now, mother. I don't know what came over me.

ANNA.

[*Leading her to basket-chair.*] Perhaps it was the heat. ~~The weather is so close.~~ There's going to be thunder. Sit here, the air from the Fiord will soon revive you.

THORA.

Anna!

ANNA.

[*Opening folding-door.*] Yes, dear?

THORA.

When Oscar was speaking the Governor asked me such a strange question.

ANNA.

What was that, Thora?

clearly
spoken. The
Helga part
lovely!

Play this
scene, gently,
sweetly,
tenderly.

Seated in
chair

standing by chair

THORA.

He asked me if I wasn't sorry we had brought Helga home with us.

ANNA.

And are you?

THORA.

Sometimes—perhaps it's foolish—sometimes I think I am.

ANNA.

[*Behind THORA's chair, smoothing her hair.*] I know! And it isn't foolish at all, dear. Oscar is doing wrong—somebody must speak to him.

THORA.

Oh, it isn't Oscar's fault. Ever since he married me I've asked myself what could a clever man like that want with a creature like me—what I can be to him.

ANNA.

You can be a good little wife to him, and that's what you are, Thora.

THORA.

But Helga is so beautiful, so brilliant. She has every advantage over me.

ANNA,

That's just where you're wrong, dear. There's one point at which our little Thora has an advantage over Helga and every other woman in the world.

THORA.

You mean with Oscar ?

ANNA. *Standing by chair*

Yes, with Oscar, because [*in a delighted whisper, her arms about THORA's neck*], because you are going to be the mother of his child !

THORA.

Sudden change is a joyful calm, a rapturous expression. [*With gleaming eyes.*] You mean that when my baby is born—

ANNA.

Oscar will forget all about Helga.

THORA.

(Do) [*Eagerly.*] You think that? Really? You think Oscar will love me again for baby's sake ?

ANNA.

He will love the child the more for the sake of the mother, and the mother the more for the sake of the child.

THORA.

[*Rapturously.*] How sweet ! How beautiful !

[*Enter AUNT MARGRET from dining-room with tray of fruit and wine.*

L.

AUNT MARGRET.

Where's my little poppet ? Ah, here she is ! You are wanted in the dining-room, Anna. [*ANNA kisses THORA and goes back.*] See, you must swallow a *Brump basket-table from back of sofa*

mouthful of this. It will put some strength into you.

THORA.

~~How good you are to me, auntie! Everybody is so good to me.~~

~~AUNT MARGRET.~~

~~Rubbish! We don't call this being good. [Holding glass.] That's good, though, isn't it?~~

THORA.

[After drinking.] Auntie, don't you think it's silly to be jealous? If a wife, for example, fancies her husband is fascinated by another woman—don't you think she's silly to be jealous?

AUNT MARGRET.

[Bringing cushion from sofa, fixing it behind THORA.] She's silly to show she is, my precious. It doesn't prevent the sting to bite the head of the serpent.

THORA.

So you think she ought to be quiet and say nothing?

AUNT MARGRET.

Certainly I do. If the man is going to run away from her she had better let him run, and if he isn't it won't do much good to be always throwing his boots after him.

THORA.

[Taking fruit, laughing nervously.] Don't you think Helga is very beautiful, Aunt Margret?

Every new line
with more eager-
ness, confidence
joy.

AUNT MARGRET.

Sits in chair R.

Perhaps.

THORA.

You *know* she is, auntie. If only a girl is beautiful *(smiling happily)* she has everybody at her feet—every man at all events.

AUNT MARGRET.

They must be the chiropodists, then, and there are not many of them in these parts. But beauty isn't everything, and that's a mercy for some of us. It's like bright metal—it fills the eye but not the belly.

THORA.

Aunt Margaret, what plain things you say sometimes! *(a little laugh)*

AUNT MARGRET.

Do I? Then it's best to say them plainly. Some women talk as if they had got nothing between their chin and their toes.

THORA.

But don't you think Helga is clever, auntie?

AUNT MARGRET.

[Bringing up footstool.] A girl who can't darn a stocking or boil a potato?

THORA.

But see what honours she has earned at college.

AUNT MARGRET.

Has she? She's one of the new women, I suppose.

*Another list question
merely to get a
negative answer
of some sort.
Thora wants Aunt
M. to contradict
her, & at each
contradiction she
becomes more happy.*

Well, I'm one of the old women, and I think more of the honours a girl earns in her kitchen.

THORA.

[*Smiling happily.*] Auntie, didn't you think Oscar was very unselfish when he signed that contract?

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Covering THORA with rug from ottoman.*] Unselfish? To sign himself into a fortune!

THORA.

But now that we have come home he will have to take up the business.

AUNT MARGRET.

Certainly he will—the best business in Iceland.

THORA.

Helga seems to think it is a little beneath him, Auntie.

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Taking up tray.*] It's good enough for Helga's father, and he made it. Besides, Oscar has nothing else, and an ugly sheep is better than no mutton.

THORA.

Oh yes, he has his music, and Helga thinks if it hadn't been for the business he might have become a great composer.

(Again as before.)

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Going back.*] Does she indeed? People who are naked needn't go about mending other people's clothes.

[*Exit AUNT MARGRET into dining-room. THORA draws a long breath of relief and happiness. People passing along the quay bow to her, "Good evening, Mrs. Thora," and she returns their salutations. Then there is the sound of a horse's hoofs on quay and MAGNUS rides up.*]

*As a result of the two interviews with Anna & Aunt M. Thora is entirely relieved, reassured & happy.
R.*

THORA.

Magnus!

MAGNUS. *Enters thro' midas*

[*Entering by folding door.*] I heard you had arrived, so I rode over to welcome you. You are well?

THORA.

Oh yes. And you?

MAGNUS.

[*Drawing chair and sitting.*] I'm strong, always strong, Thora.

~~THORA.~~

~~And everything is going on comfortably at the farm?~~

~~MAGNUS.~~

Everything!

~~THORA.~~

~~Then that—that cloud has quite blown over.~~

MAGNUS.

~~Not quite perhaps. But the Governor has been fair with me—very fair under the circumstances. The farm is my own now on terms of tenancy, and when the old people are gone it is to be mine altogether. But what a time you've been away!~~

She is trying to cover up her secret.

Scaped by Chair

THORA.

Haven't we? Seven months—nearly eight.

MAGNUS.

And you've been everywhere in the meantime?

THORA.

Everywhere—Rome, Naples, Venice, Nice, Monte Carlo!

MAGNUS.

All the sunny south lands! The sun should have done you good, Thora. Yet you are pale—a little pale perhaps.

THORA.

Oh there's nothing—nothing the matter with me.

She is trying to cover up her secret.

MAGNUS.

You enjoyed your journey?

THORA.

Oscar did—every day of it.

MAGNUS.

And you, Thora?

THORA.

I'm not a good traveller. I soon tire of sight-seeing—of picture-galleries and opera-houses and casinos—and if it hadn't been for Helga——

MAGNUS.

Helga? Has Helga been away with you?

Stands & sits again

THORA.

Oh yes! She had just finished her course at college when we passed through Copenhagen, so we took her along with us.

MAGNUS.

You took Helga on your honeymoon?

THORA.

[*Laughing nervously.*] It was all my own doing. I thought Oscar could never be dull for a moment while Helga was with us.

She feels the folly of it & tries to cover it up.

MAGNUS.

So Helga used to go with Oscar to the opera-houses and casinos?

THORA.

Every day, every night, nearly always.

MAGNUS.

While you used to stay in the hotel?

THORA.

[*Awkwardly.*] Yes, I used to stay in the hotel.

a shade of sadness.

MAGNUS. *Leaning over her*

Were you not lonely while they were away?

THORA.

*Far away look,
a wistful expression,
a little sadness.* Sometimes perhaps—just a little—being so much alone and among so many strange faces.

MAGNUS.

[Rising.] And I thought you were so happy.

THORA.

[Eagerly.] But it was my own fault. I wished it. *Magnus turns away.*
I mean I—I didn't wish Oscar to feel that I was a drag on him, so while Helga and he took pleasure in *goes toward window*
these places—
[Stops, breaks down, wipes her eyes stealthily.]

MAGNUS.

It must have cost a deal of money to see all these *comes back R. C.*
sights, Thora.

THORA.

It must. Travelling is so expensive—especially when there is more than one to pay for.

MAGNUS.

And then there was Helga.

THORA.

Yes indeed, there was Helga. But father and the Governor gave Oscar a cheque ~~for five thousand~~
~~crowns~~ on the day of the betrothal, and it seems to have been sufficient for all.

MAGNUS.

Crossing to L. of Chair

Still I cannot understand how he made it pay for everything.

THORA.

[*Uneasily.*] No, it isn't easy to understand that, is it?

[*The SHERIFF and a STRANGER come from quay to door of verandah.*]

SHERIFF.

R.

I beg pardon, Mrs. Thora. ~~Sorry to come at an inopportune moment.~~ This gentleman is from Copenhagen and he wishes to see the Governor on important business.

Thora sees what is coming - vaguely.

THORA.

But the Governor is still at dinner, and unless the business is urgent—

anxiously, nervously.

SHERIFF.

I'm afraid it is—extremely urgent.

MAGNUS.

But my brother and his wife have only just returned from abroad, and if the matter can wait until tomorrow—

L. by table

SHERIFF.

[*To stranger.*] This is the elder son of the Governor, and if you would like to ask him a question—

AGENT.

Goes towards table

I should. [*To MAGNUS, taking a paper from his*

pocket.] I am an agent of the Bank of Denmark and this is a Note of Hand for a large sum drawn by —(SHERIFF, glancing at THORA, "H'm! H'm!")— drawn by a member of your family.

[With a suppressed cry THORA rises and comes down to sofa. . . .]

MAGNUS.

Well ?

AGENT.

It purports to be signed by your father as security and witnessed by Factor Neilsen.

MAGNUS.

Well, sir ?

AGENT.

Naturally you know your father's handwriting ?

MAGNUS.

I do.

AGENT.

[Handing document.] Will you be good enough to say if this is your father's signature ?

[MAGNUS takes paper, looks at it, starts perceptibly, recovers himself, glances at THORA and hands the paper back.]

MAGNUS.

Don't you think it would be more proper to ask that question of my father himself ?

Thora goes to settle

AGENT.

No doubt—certainly—but to protect your father's interests—

SHERIFF. *Comes down to Magnus*

Magnus, to make the position clear to you, we ought to say that though this deed is drawn in the name you see, and dated from Copenhagen, it turns out that it was negotiated by a lady—

MAGNUS.

[*Involuntarily.*] A lady?

SHERIFF.

And that the money was paid to her at Nice.

STRANGER.

Therefore if there is anything wrong, as the Bank sees reason to fear—if your father did not really sign this document—and your brother's honour is being played with by somebody—

[*Another suppressed cry from THORA.*]

SHERIFF.

On the other hand, if you can say the signature is genuine, the gentleman will take your word for it under the circumstances, and go back to Copenhagen without troubling the Governor.

Thora sids

MAGNUS.

[*After glancing at THORA.*] My sister is unwell—let me call at your house in half an hour, Sheriff.

SHERIFF.

That will do. Excuse me, Mrs. Thora—sorry, very sorry!

[Exit SHERIFF and STRANGER. *linda R.*]

THORA.

[Rising.] Was it the Governor's signature?

} meet C.

MAGNUS.

Don't ask me.

THORA.

But was it?

MAGNUS.

No.

THORA.

Did you recognise the handwriting?

MAGNUS.

Don't disturb yourself, Thora.

THORA.

Did you?

MAGNUS.

I thought I did.

THORA.

[Excitedly.] Then this is Helga's doing—I feel it is, I know it is!

Thora goes to *settle*—*Woman*

MAGNUS.

[Taking her arm.] You are exciting yourself, Thora. Let me help you to your room.

R

Lifts her up
& takes her
up stage.

THORA.

~~[Helplessly, going up towards staircase.]~~ I'm not beautiful and clever as Helga is. I'm only a poor, ignorant little thing—I know that quite well. But oh, my love for Oscar was wonderful. I could have done anything for him—anything. [*Vehemently.*] And if Helga—

still going up to stairs

helplessly, pathetically.

sudden anger

MAGNUS.

Leave everything to me, Thora—everything.

THORA.

[*Turning at opening.*] What will you do at the Sheriff's, Magnus?

another tone

MAGNUS.

I must see Oscar before I go. If he listens to what I say this may be a good thing for all of us. But if not—

THORA.

You wouldn't do anything to Oscar's injury?

pleadingly

MAGNUS.

Many a man sharpens his axe who never uses it. [*Tenderly.*] Come, sister—come!

Thora goes up stairs

[*He leads her to the foot of stairs and stands waiting until she disappears. Meantime OSCAR comes bounding out of dining-room.*]

OSCAR.

Thora! Thora!

[*Goes on to verandah calling, then returns as MAGNUS comes back through opening.*]

The old rush goes to window & spontaneously

MAGNUS. Comes down + meets him

Thora has gone to her room, Oscar.

OSCAR. R

hurriedly [Crossing to follow her.] Ah, Magnus! Delighted to see you. We must talk a little later.

MAGNUS. L. stops Oscar

Wait!

OSCAR.

Another time.

MAGNUS.

[Laying hand on OSCAR's arm as he crosses.] Now! I have something to say to you.

OSCAR. Sits in broken chair

A little sense of confusion If it is about my promise to set you right with the old people, I must explain that unfortunately—thus far——

MAGNUS.

Never mind that now. I want to speak of another matter.

OSCAR.

What is it?

MAGNUS.

Thora. Have you looked at her? She is ill.

OSCAR. Crosses to L.

Not worse than might be expected under the circumstances.

MAGNUS.

What circumstances?

OSCAR.

Well . . . Thora is to be a mother before long.

MAGNUS.

Is there no other cause, Oscar? goes to L.

OSCAR.

What other cause could there be?

MAGNUS.

Her sister, for instance.

OSCAR.

Helga?

MAGNUS.

Helga and Thora can no longer live under the same roof-tree, Oscar.

OSCAR.

Why not?

MAGNUS.

Thora is your wife, and the sweetest woman in the world; but Helga—Helga is sheep from another sheepfold.

OSCAR.

[After a moment.] I cannot pretend to misunderstand you, Magnus; but apparently you are not aware that Helga has been away with us.

She is on arm of sofa
a smile - a little
confusion - natural
motherly in talking
of such a thing.

Magnus grows fiercer
 & more & more
 incensed as the
 scene goes on.

MAGNUS.

I know all about that. There are women with the instinct—the mania—of self-sacrifice. Thora is one of them.

OSCAR.

If you mean that it was for my sake—mine only—L. C.
 that Helga travelled in our company—

MAGNUS.

It was.

OSCAR.

Who told you so?

MAGNUS.

Thora herself.

OSCAR.

bridling up -
 gathering anger

So you confess that you have been talking with my wife on this intimate—this delicate subject?

MAGNUS.

I do.

OSCAR.

[*Firing up.*] ~~Then you must excuse my saying,~~
~~Magnus, that~~ it would have been a better and more
 brotherly thing if you had attended to your own
 business.

MAGNUS.

This is my business. I intend to make it so. And I tell you plainly that Helga's place is no longer in this house.

Incisively

[OSCAR controls his anger and bursts out laughing.]

OSCAR. *Crosses to R.*

It is impossible to be angry with you, Magnus. You do not understand the position—the position in which Helga and I stand to each other. It is friendship.

Foot on stool.

MAGNUS. *C.*

Don't deceive yourself, Oscar.

OSCAR.

Is friendship impossible between a man and a woman?

MAGNUS. *C.*

Possible or not possible, I advise you to put an end to it.

OSCAR.

[*Laughing again.*] We simply do not understand each other, Magnus. We talk different languages—stand on different ground.

Crosses to L.

MAGNUS. *C.*

Then yours is the ground of a geyser and it is breaking up under your feet. I warn you to turn—turn, Oscar, before it is too late.

*sharply,
firmly*

OSCAR. *L.*

Very kind and considerate. But I am not afraid of your geysers, Magnus; and even if I am to be swallowed up I presume it will be my own concern.

*laughing again
(seriously)*

MAGNUS. *C.*

Then what about Thora? Do you want to bring her to her death?

F

OSCAR.

Her death?

MAGNUS.

Her death by neglect and torture.

OSCAR.

[*Bridling up.*] Torture?

MAGNUS.

Torture! The torture of seeing another woman take her place.

OSCAR.

Good Lord, man, do you really think I'm going to allow an outsider, even if he is my brother, to conduct my family affairs?

MAGNUS.

[*Firmly.*] Oscar, the time has come for you to choose between Thora and Helga. Choose, and choose now—it will be best, I promise you.

OSCAR.

[*Hotly.*] Have you done? Quite done? Then listen to me. I resent the miserably low standard by which you judge me, ~~and I trample your insinuations under my feet.~~ The bond between Helga and me is not the same as the bond between me and my wife. Helga is my companion, my comrade. We have everything in common—the same interests, the same tastes. Since she came into my life I have felt like another being. She has given me new strength, new joy, new inspiration. Her sympathy and en-

Angrier

indignantly:
how is the indignation?

couragement have awakened whatever gifts nature has given me. And must I, at the call of a cursed conventionality which makes evil of everything, sacrifice a friend who has made me better and nobler?

Wrath

MAGNUS.

Has she always done that? [*A pause.*] Ask yourself. Ask your memory—your conscience. [*Another pause.*] I know nothing about differences of bond—I know nothing about conventionalities. I only know that the woman who comes into a family at the invitation of an unsuspecting wife and then pushes her from her place is one who will deceive the husband as she has deceived the wife and stick at nothing.

Oscar goes L:
cold incisively,
cutting Oscar
to the quick

OSCAR.

Magnus Stephensson!

MAGNUS.

Stick at nothing, I say—not even at dragging the man down to disgrace and crime.

OSCAR.

[*Almost dumfounded.*] Crime?

MAGNUS.

Oscar, you must tell Helga to leave this house.

OSCAR.

~~She is my guest—I will not insult her.~~

MAGNUS.

~~You must tell her to leave this house.~~

Oscar is struggling
hard.

THE PRODIGAL SON

ACT II

OSCAR. L

But whose house is it?

MAGNUS. C

Neither yours nor mine, yet all the same you must tell her to leave it.

OSCAR.

And if I refuse?

MAGNUS.

Then I must turn her out of it.

her too defiantly -
almost fiercely.
Face to face

~~OSCAR.~~

~~[In a choking voice.] You mean that that you know something something you will tell our father?~~

~~MAGNUS,~~

~~[In a low, firm voice.] Yes.~~

[A dead pause. Enter HELGA from dining-room, humming tune. She comes down between.]

HELGA. from L. Crosses to R.
 They turn away as she speaks.

Ah, Magnus! What an age since we met! But you two seem to be quarrelling. What is it about? Come, let me act as arbitrator? May I?

MAGNUS.

You may, and as peacemaker as well if you will, Helga.

HELGA.

Charming!

gracefully,
charmingly.

MAGNUS.

I have been urging Oscar to do something he is unwilling to do. It concerns yourself, Helga, and I must leave him to tell you what it is. If he decides to do it, I give him my promise that I will protect him, for his wife's sake, against a great peril which is hanging over his head. But if he will not, and you will not, and anything worse should happen, I warn you—[*he steps back to door*—I warn you that when he is turned into the road he shall not go alone.

[*Exit MAGNUS. Silence until he has crossed verandah. Then the others speak in rapid whispers, standing side by side.*

HELGA.

What did he mean?

OSCAR.

He knows, Helga.

HELGA.

Knows what?

OSCAR.

~~That~~ (very softly) Helga. About the paper?

HELGA? Oscar. Yes.

Did he say so?

OSCAR.

No, but he has been talking with Thora.

HELGA.

But Thora herself does not know.

goes up
Helga's face shows
her apprehensions of
what Magnus
means.

through mind as

whispers

OSCAR.

Then I cannot understand. My brain is confused, racked, stupid.

HELGA.

He has frightened you—that's all.

OSCAR.

~~I must be a miserable coward now, Helga. Every-~~ *sits on sofa*
thing frightens me.

HELGA.

Crosses to him
~~You'll begin business to-morrow—we'll soon be out~~
of this bother.

OSCAR.

Never! It's like walking in deep snow—to drag out of one hole you must plunge into another. My poor father! I ask myself again and again how it came to pass and I can find no answer. Sometimes I think I was mad—I must have been.

HELGA.

Let us not talk of it to-day, Oscar. Why should we meet misfortune before it comes? [*Feeling for his hand.*] Whatever happens I shall never forget you did that for me, dear, and if—

[*Voices heard in dining-room.*]

Hush! They're coming out.

[*She begins to sing "Santa Lucia."* OSCAR *sits at piano and plays the tune.* HELGA, *singing, goes over to verandah and plucks flowers. The hum of talk is heard from within.*

FACTOR.

Thanks for the meal, Anna!

OTHER VOICES.

Thanks! Thanks!

ANNA.

Coffee on the verandah, Marta!

[*Company come out.* ANNA, the FACTOR, the
PASTOR, AUNT MARGRET and GOVERNOR,
then DOCTOR OLSEN.]

But where's Thora?

OSCAR.

[*Very softly.*] Gone to her room, mother.

Already? FACTOR. *Coming down C.*

DOCTOR.

Good—very good!

FACTOR.

[*Coming down with* GOVERNOR.] Anything in the
wind, think you?

GOVERNOR.

So Doctor Olsen says.

FACTOR.

[*Delightedly.*] Well, that's wonderful!

GOVERNOR.

Isn't it?

[*They take snuff together nodding and laughing.* C.]

ANNA.

Crossing with face.

R.

[*Coming down right by ottoman.*] What are you
two men laughing at?

Sits at
spinning
wheel.

GOVERNOR.

[*Sitting on sofa.*] Oh, nothing!

Sits on sofa
L.

FACTOR.

[*Sitting on ottoman.*] Nothing at all, Anna. [*They
nod and laugh again.*]

AUNT MARGRET.

Seated on sofa

[*Taking crocheting from table and sitting upper
end of sofa.*] Goodness me, what do you do when you
are laughing at something, I wonder?

L.

ANNA.

[*Sitting at spinning-wheel.*] Dear Thora, she must
have been anxious to come home! Wasn't she
anxious, Oscar?

OSCAR.

[*Still playing softly.*] I think she was, mother.

PASTOR.

Ah, you can't tether a home-sick pony.

DOCTOR.

And you, Helga?

HELGA.

[*Coming down to table with flowers.*] I wasn't anxious at all, Doctor.

DOCTOR.

Oh, oh, oh!

HELGA.

Who *could* be anxious to leave all that loveliness for this stark old wilderness?

GOVERNOR.

What do you say to that, Oscar?

OSCAR.

[*Pausing, then playing impetuously.*] I say Iceland is stark and wild, father, but if some one could set it to music, grim as its glaciers and fierce as its fires, it would take the world by storm.

(a cry of "Oh,
Oh" from the
others)

music changes

HELGA.

Do it, Oscar, do it, and we'll love you.

FACTOR.

Seated on ~~the~~ ottoman

Nonsense! Oscar has something better to do now than scrape cat-gut or blow his lungs through a brass pipe.

PASTOR.

Still, an occasional flirtation with the muses—you wouldn't object to that, Factor.

mid a laugh.

FACTOR.

I should object to flirtations of all sorts, and think

the man a fool who puts himself in the way of them.

GOVERNOR.

I agree with the Factor. Oscar has got his work cut out for him, and a man can't have his heart in two places at once. What do you say, Helga?

HELGA.

[*Arranging flowers in vase.*] I suppose not, Governor.

GOVERNOR.

Certainly not, Helga, any more than a man can love two women at the same time.

AUNT MARGRET.

Surprising how many men try to, though!

FACTOR.

(*general laughter*)
And now, Oscar, you've told us all about Rome and Venice and Vesuvius and the Vatican, but not a word about the place where they make money without working for it.

OSCAR.

Monte Carlo? Haven't I? Oh well [*playing noisily*], a beautiful place! In fact an absolute paradise.

PASTOR.

An absolute hell if half one hears is true.

standing by basket chair

OSCAR.

Yes—it's that as well, Pastor.

ANNA. *R. on settle* (???)

[*Stopping her wheel.*] They say people are always playing cards there, and that everybody is always having a holiday.

AUNT MARGRET. *L. on sofa*

Then the devil isn't—you may be sure of that, Anna.

FACTOR. *R. settle*

But think of the money they make, Margret!

(laughter of company)

AUNT MARGRET.

Tut! What's the use of a cow that gives plenty of milk if she's always kicking over the pail?

FACTOR.

I once heard of a man who made ten pounds in a single night.

ANNA.

[*Stopping again.*] Goodness me, what wealth there must be in the world!

AUNT MARGRET.

Wealth? Sssh! What's the good of having a chest full of gold if the devil keeps the key?

GOVERNOR. *L. on sofa*

He keeps it pretty tight too. When I was at college I knew a young man . . . you remember him, Doctor . . . [DOCTOR nods] a young man who lost the whole value of his father's farm in a fortnight.

ANNA.

But surely they gave it back to him in the end, Stephen?

GOVERNOR.

Not they, wife—nobody is anybody's brother in a game. He said he hadn't intended to play at all when he went into the rooms, but the fever mastered him and he couldn't resist it.

AUNT MARGRET.

I thought it was a sort of fever—*yellow* fever I call it, and the women have it worst, I hear.

GOVERNOR.

His father was Sheriff of ~~Ankoyen~~ and died within a year, and his old mother ended her days in a poor-house. That's how one thing leads to another, you see.

ANNA.

And they call it amusement!

AUNT MARGRET.

Bamboozlement I call it, Anna.

GOVERNOR.

And I call it crime. A man like that is a criminal, and I would have him tried on the capital charge.

ANNA.

But the poor boy didn't mean to do mischief, father. We don't see the ruts when the snow covers them.

*Oscar & Helga
must be acting all
through this scene—
Oscar cut to the bone.
Helga watching him
closely
Rises*

And then think what he must have suffered with a thing like that on his conscience!

GOVERNOR.

Serve him right, I say! The man who gambles with his own money is a suicide, but the man who gambles with other people's is a scoundrel. It stifles me to breathe the very air such people live in! *Runs*

FACTOR. *Rises - goes L.C.*

I don't agree with you there, Stephen. All life is a game of chance, and it's one up, another down, in everything. Somebody loses, somebody wins, and what does it matter whether the pig eats the dog or the dog eats the pig? What do you say, Oscar?

OSCAR.

[*Who has stopped playing.*] I— Oh, I don't know that—that father isn't right—and I—I confess—

[*He stammers, catches HELGA's eye, laughs confusedly, and begins to play again, whereupon HELGA breaks in impetuously.*

HELGA. *Coming forward*

Ah, "Addio Bella Napoli!" I must sing you some of the Neapolitan songs, father.

FACTOR and GOVERNOR.

Good idea!

ANNA.

[*Going up.*] And I must go to my charge upstairs.

[*She goes through hall. At same moment MARTA, carrying tray, crosses to verandah. All rise.*

Oscar stops playing & listens with a pained expression.

Rises at piano

all rise

goes up stairs at back

HELGA.

Or wait! I know what I'll do—I'll dance you a tarantella.

DOCTOR.

Splendid!

HELGA.

It represents—help me with this table, Pastor—it represents the wooing of a bashful girl by her bold, bad lover. First she will, then she won't—but she does in the end, you know.

move
table up
C.

AUNT MARGRET.

Gracious me! Does what?

HELGA.

Accepts him, of course.

AUNT MARGRET.

Well, that's a relief! I was wondering if I hadn't better go upstairs, too.

HELGA.

[*Snatching up AUNT MARGRET'S ~~hat~~ for a tam-
bourine.*] All ready?

VOICES.

[*All gathering round.*] Ready!

HELGA. "Tarantella."

Then begin again, Oscar.

[*OSCAR strikes up afresh, HELGA dances, the old
men clap hands.*]

OSCAR.

Brava! Brava!

DOCTOR.

How well she dances!

OSCAR.

Doesn't she? She does everything well.

GOVERNOR.

Delightful!

OSCAR.

Divine! Enchanting! Go on, Helga.

HELGA.

[*Breaking off.*] I can't! It needs two to dance the tarantella.

OSCAR.

[*Jumping up.*] Then I'll join you.[*Chorus of delight.*

HELGA.

But who is to play the accompaniment? I know—
I'll play and you and Aunt Margret will dance.

AUNT MARGRET.

What an idea!

FACTOR.

The very thing! Our Margret as the bashful
maiden will be the very thing.

During dance
and very dainty
having to
men laughing &
cheering etc.

OSCAR.

[*Dragging AUNT MARGRET into middle of floor.*] It's quite easy. You've only to stand here while I dance round you.

AUNT MARGRET.

Well, if that's all . . .

OSCAR.

Now, Helga !

[*HELGA strikes up and calls directions as OSCAR dances.*]

HELGA.

Good ! Charming ! Now back—now forward—now round—go round him, auntie.

[*AUNT MARGRET begins to dance, the men laugh and cheer.*]

FACTOR.

Splendid ! Hold up your skirts, Margret.

AUNT MARGRET.

Gracious, no ! Oscar, you really mustn't—

HELGA.

Quicker, quicker !

AUNT MARGRET.

Helga, Helga ! Not so fast. You'll kill me.

HELGA.

Can't stop when you've once begun, auntie.

[*AUNT MARGRET dances faster and faster, flinging herself into the fun. The dance*]

ends by OSCAR throwing his arms about AUNT MARGRET and kissing her. Men laugh uproariously. ANNA returns to hall.

ANNA. *Coming down*

Goodness me, Margret Neilsen, is it you?

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Sinking back on ottoman.*] No, but it's true, though.

GOVERNOR.

(*laughing*) [Wiping his eyes.] Well, well, everything has a stopping-spot except time. Marta is on the verandah, and the coffee is getting cold. *Change of music turning out for the first time*

FACTOR. (*turning up*)

Good! Coming for a cigar, Oscar?

OSCAR.

[*Going up with his arm in ANNA'S.*] By-and-by, Factor.

ANNA.

[*Offering hats.*] Hats, gentlemen? The thunder is not far off—I can feel it in the air.

GOVERNOR.

[*From verandah.*] Yes, the storm will be down presently.

[AUNT MARGRET, FACTOR, GOVERNOR, DOCTOR and PASTOR pass over verandah and out of

Gov. Pastor & Aunt M. Dr.

Factor Anna.

G

sight. OSCAR kisses his hand to ANNA, who kisses her hand back, and follows them. The sky is growing dark. MARTA returns from verandah and goes out through hall. Meantime HELGA, who has been playing a stormy passage on piano, strikes a loud note and holds it, while OSCAR, who has come down, stands beside her.

HELGA, seated at piano
[When the note has died away.] Well? coming down to Helga

OSCAR.

We cannot go on like this, Helga—it is impossible.

~~HELGA.~~

~~Don't think of it. What occurred to-day may never occur again.~~

~~OSCAR.~~

~~But it will—I feel it will. It will go on and on. And it will be like living on the edge of a precipice.~~

HELGA.

What do you think we had better do?

OSCAR.

I think . . . I almost think . . . perhaps after all it would be better to do as Magnus said.

HELGA.

[Rising.] What was that?

with a low cry of pain

In a whisper (rising)

OSCAR.

He said . . . but I hate to think of it.

HELGA,

What did he say, Oscar?

OSCAR.

That you and I should part.

HELGA,

Meaning that I should go away?

OSCAR.

[*Scarcely audibly.*] Yes.

HELGA.

Or else . . . your father should be told . . . about that?

OSCAR.

He shall be told about that in any case, Helga. I shall tell him myself. If you hadn't come to my relief at that moment I should have told him then—then and there and before everybody. But that is not the worst.

HELGA.

What is, Oscar?

OSCAR.

Thora. She is grieving herself to death. It is pitiful.

taking stage R. returning C.
vehemently,
with intense
earnestness

HELGA. *Blushes*[~~Creeping to right of him.~~] So you conclude—

OSCAR. C.

Get this out well. It explains Oscar's position - tells what has occurred between Acts I & II.

When a man is married to a good woman he ought to be true to her. His marriage may have been a mistake, an unpardonable mistake, but whatever the consequences to himself he ought to do his duty. He may have acted on impulse, before he was sure of himself or knew what he was doing, but all the same he must be loyal and true. If he has to suffer he must suffer, and if he has to sacrifice himself—

[Covers his face.]

HELGA. *Going up to Oscar*

in a low, hushed, earnest whisper

So you think I ought to leave Iceland immediately? *Going up to Oscar*

OSCAR.

It will only be a little earlier than you intended, Helga. You will go away in any case—you will go to Paris for your lessons, your studies.

HELGA.

And what will you do, Oscar?

OSCAR.

I—I will take up my *duty* ~~burden~~ here in Iceland.

HELGA.

My father's business?

OSCAR.

Yes! I am unfit for it—utterly unfit for it—but ~~I cannot leave the Governor in the lurch. And then there's Thora.~~ If I break the contract I will break her heart. Better break my own—better break my own!

[He sits on lower end of sofa, his face in his hands. She leans against upper end of it.]

felt even

HELGA.

But you were born to create music, Oscar, and whatever happens, you must never, never throw away a life that has the glory of a future like that.

*with charm -
a caressing
manner*

OSCAR. *Seated C.*

God knows! I used to dream of such things. And perhaps if I could have had you beside me always, Helga. . . . But that is past praying for now—better not think of it.

*Looking
me in the
eye*

HELGA.

When you go into my father's business all your dreams will be over.

OSCAR.

They're over already, HELGA. And Oscar—Oscar Stephensson, the musician—is dead.

[He rises, crosses right, she rises, stands left of him.]

HELGA.

[Softly.] Are things so absolutely irretrievable, Oscar?

Coming down to Oscar - over his shoulder

OSCAR.

Absolutely.

HELGA.

[*Closer.*] But if—instead of going to Paris—I were to remain with you——

Seated on ottoman OSCAR.

I—I dare not trust myself, Helga. I told Magnus the bond between us was friendship, but that was a lie. I've tried to believe it myself, but as often as I've looked into your face I've known it was a lie. I knew it was a lie when you brought me that paper at Nice, for your eyes were close to mine and they wiped out all the world. And I know it is a lie now—now—

leaving me HELGA.

Oscar! You tell me this, yet you ask me to go away?

OSCAR.

I must. And henceforward and all my life long I must learn to go on without your comradeship.

HELGA.

And what must I do, Oscar?

OSCAR.

You must forget what I have said and live your own life without me.

HELGA.

But if I cannot forget what you have said—if I cannot live without you?

OSCAR. *Rising*

Don't say that, Helga.

HELGA. *leaning over him*

But I do say it—I do, I do.

OSCAR. *R.*

~~Then badly as I have injured Thora the wrong I have done to you is still more terrible. Help me, Helga! Tell me what I am to do—tell me, tell me!~~

rising to a cry of pain

[He sits on ottoman, covering his face. She leans over it, close behind him. THORA is seen coming downstairs, with wraps about her head and shoulders.]

HELGA. *(touching his shoulder)*

a change of tone

~~*[In a low voice.]*~~ Oscar, you remember our old schoolfellow, Neils Finsen?

OSCAR.

[Without looking up.] Yes.

HELGA.

Neils has had a great success since he went to England. ~~He always believed in you as a musician, you know. He believes in me, too, and says my voice has improved wonderfully.~~

quietly, significantly

OSCAR.

[Uncovering his face.] Well?

with gathering anxiety

HELGA.

There was a letter from Neils when we arrived this morning. He has become manager of opera somewhere on the Riviera.

OSCAR.

[*With expression of pain.*] Well? Well?

HELGA.

He says if—if you and I would care to join him —

OSCAR.

*Runs. Steps back.
crosses to L.*

[*Leaping up, crossing left.*] Helga! How can you think of such a thing? Remember your father, my father, my mother, your aunt, and above all Thora. Think of the waste of ruined lives we should leave behind us!

[~~Thora has reached the bottom of the stairs.
She stands there.~~

~~HELGA~~

~~Would that be worse than the wilderness of lying
and do you will have to live in if you remain
at home?~~

~~OSCAR~~ OSCAR

~~But think of yourself your good name your
reputation! No, no, I can't! I won't! If this had
come to us a year ago perhaps, but now, . . . Come,
let us go on to the verandah.~~

*Shy thing
with his
position*

Verandah

This scene should gather intensity as it goes on, until it realizes a climax of passion

ACT II

THE PRODIGAL SON

105

HELGA.

R. C.

Oscar, the law of the world is trying to crush and ruin both of us. It is trying to bury your genius and destroy my happiness—to condemn me to lifelong loneliness and you to the misery of a loveless marriage.

OSCAR.

L. C.

[Gasping and trembling.] Helga! *stepping back*

with triumphal smile - all the charm possible - growing tender & tender.

HELGA.

But there is another law, a higher law, the law of our own hearts, and we ought to obey that. Let us obey it.

(Do)

OSCAR.

Helga! Helga!

HELGA.

[Opening her arms to him.] We must, we shall, we cannot help ourselves. Oscar!

(Do)

OSCAR.

Helga!

[He throws himself into her arms, and there is a short, passionate embrace. Then he breaks away from her.]

OSCAR.

God help me! God forgive me!

Going up to verandah.

[He flies off on to verandah. HELGA falls back to ~~place~~. At same instant she sees THORA, who leans against the wall, white and speechless. The two women stand staring at each other for a moment. There is a low rumble of distant thunder.

Thunder - low rumble

HELGA.

deep whisper

Thora! How long have you been there?

THORA.

[*Helplessly.*] Oh! Oh! *leaning on table*

HELGA. *going up to veranda*

(So)

You have overheard us—I see you have.

THORA.

God help me! help me!

HELGA.

whisper

[*Going to folding doors and closing them.*] Hush!
You don't want to rouse the family.

THORA.

very pathetically
flings herself
on Helga's arms

[*Weakly, coming down to sofa.*] I've had such a
struggle for his love, and just when I hoped it would
come back to me——[*crying*]

HELGA.

*Knocking beside Thora
at sofa*

Be quiet, Thora, that's a good girl.

THORA.

(So)

[*Sinking on sofa.*] Anna said it would—but now—
now——

HELGA.

[*Standing by her.*] Don't cry. Don't break down! They'll hear you on the verandah. Besides, it can do you no good to upset yourself, you know.

THORA.

I've not been very happy in my marriage, but I hoped that when my baby came——

*to herself - not
to Helga*

HELGA.

It will be all right. I'll go away. *Rising* I meant to go in any case. I'll find some excuse and go immediately. Only be quiet—don't make a scene. *Looks up stage*

THORA.

[*Drying her eyes and leaping up.*] But what am I whining about? You've been trying to tempt my husband away from me, haven't you?

firmly, strongly

HELGA.

Hush! You'll hurt yourself.

moving from Thora

following her THORA.

Admit it—admit it! Why don't you admit it?

(loudly)

HELGA.

[*Stepping right.*] Very well, if you take it that way, I admit it.

THORA.

From the first you tried to take Oscar away from me—you know you did. You were not ashamed to try during our honeymoon, and you are trying now—

*(quickly,
in a low voice)*

even now—because you are lost to all sisterly feeling—
—all loyalty and pity and shame.

HELGA.

(a little
cruelly of tone)
Oh yes, you think you have been a great martyr. But would it surprise you to hear that somebody else has gone through a still greater martyrdom? You think I have inflicted tortures upon you—what of the tortures you have inflicted upon me?

THORA. L.C.

I?

R.C.

HELGA. Turning to Thora

Yes, you! You speak as if I were the sort of woman who draws a man into her net and tears him away from the wife he loves. You would be nearer right if you thought of me as another kind of woman altogether—one who is herself the sufferer—who comes too late and must remain all her life unmated because—because the man who loves her is married to some one else.

Turns up stage

THORA.

Helga——!

HELGA. Turning quickly

(louder)
Oh, I should have had mercy on your condition, but you wouldn't let me. And now if you wish to hear the truth I will tell you.

THORA.

And what is the truth?

Moves close to Thora HELGA.

[*Crossing behind her to left.*] The truth is that Oscar has never loved you at all.

THORA.

Helga, how dare you? The falseness of what you say is on the face of it. If Oscar never loved me, why am I his wife? Why did he marry me?

Gasping - as if this breath were almost arrested.

HELGA. *Moving to Ottomar*

He married you out of pity—to save you from a humiliating position when Magnus cast you off and you were an object of shame.

THORA. *C*

(loudly) It is not true, it is not true.

HELGA.

Oh, you mustn't suppose I'm saying this without a certainty. I had it from himself.

THORA.

Gasping) Himself?

HELGA.

(loudly) From his own mouth. He told me his marriage had been a mistake—an unpardonable mistake; that he acted on impulse, before he was sure of himself or knew what he was doing.

THORA.

(hotly, quickly) You lie, Helga, you lie! When we were married

Oscar loved me—he knows he did. It was not until you came between us that his love began to leave me—to slip away—
[*Breaking down.*]

Turning to Thora HELGA. C.

Was that so very wonderful? I tried to sympathise with him and help him, whereas you had never sympathised with him and never helped him, because you could not and he was beyond you.

THORA.

Yes, I used to think that at one time; and when I thought so I could have given him up to you. God help me, yes, I could have given him up to you for his own good, though it would have been giving up everything I wanted in the world. But now—now that I know that you would take him away not only from me but from his unborn child—
going to support her head

HELGA.

ushing to Thora
Ssh, for heaven's sake! [THORA *sinks on to ottoman, her face in her hands.*] What of the unborn children of his brain—the children that will never be born while he remains with you? If I was taking him away, perhaps it was only to give him a chance of the greatness his genius entitles him to.

crossing to THORA.

[*Leaping up.*] It's false! You were thinking of yourself—of the assistance he could give you in your own career. That's all the greatness you were thinking of, Helga. And if he goes with you and cannot give it, you'll throw him up for the first man who can.

HELGA.

[Hotly.] Thora!

THORA.

Oh, you've despised me long enough—now I despise you. ~~Where is the difference between you and the kind of women we saw in the Casinos abroad?~~

more loudly,
more passionately

HELGA.

[Still more hotly.] Thora!

THORA.

What is it to be a creature of that sort? It is to love yourself more than the man who loves you—to use him as a thing to minister to your vanity, your pleasure—to draw him by your beauty, your smiles—to turn him which way you will—to lead him blindly on and on until you are done with him, and then to walk him into his grave. That's what it is to be a creature of that sort—and you are one of them.

This must be re-
hearsed again &
again—it should
build up & up to
a climax of great
worth, ending with
abstained arm &
hand.

HELGA.

going to Thora

[Laying hold of THORA's wrist.] Thora, if you say—

THORA.

C

[Wrenching herself free.] Oh, you cannot frighten me now. I used to be afraid of you when I thought you were so much my superior and could do something for Oscar that I could never do. But now that I know that you are only degrading and debasing him and leading him into the hands of the law

with an hysterical
laugh.

loudly-reaching
climax in last
word

crossing Thora's

crossing Thora's

(in a whisper) [Frightened.] What do you mean? *stepping L.*

THORA.

You know quite well what I mean, Helga. *L.*

HELGA.

(*Bo.*) [Breathless.] Did Magnus tell you that?

THORA.

down stage L. No, but he knows of it, and I have only to raise my finger—

HELGA.

C. move to R.

Total change of tone & manner! Her fear indicated. [Coming down.] Look here, Thora. There's no harm done yet. There has been nothing between Oscar and me. Don't let Magnus say anything. It would be so horrible for me if the trouble came out like that. I confess I was to blame. It was when we were on the Riviera. I thought it would be splendid to have money of one's own and be independent of everybody. Luck was against me, but I felt certain it would change. The paper would only be a matter of form and the Governor would hear nothing about it. So I persuaded Oscar—it was all my fault—

THORA.

(loudly) [With an hysterical cry.] I knew it! I said so to Magnus! And now I'll say so to all the world. *Crossing up R. turning up to Helga*

HELGA.

[Threateningly.] If you dare—

THORA. *turning on Helga*

[Coming down on her.] What will you do?

crossing to R. HELGA.

Nothing! But if I am to go away in disgrace I'll take Oscar with me.

laughingly, with a laugh

THORA.

You shall not!

(vehemently)

HELGA.

Helga Thora

[Proudly.] I will! You'll see I will!

THORA.

[Laying hold of HELGA.] You shall not! Before you shall drag my husband down to disgrace and death—

losing himself. entirely - wild eyes, loud voice - the gentle creature transformed to a tiger in defence of her husband.

[In her frenzy THORA forces HELGA to her knees. HELGA screams. THORA throws her away violently. OSCAR opens door and rushes in.]

OSCAR.

[Raising HELGA.] What's this? What's this?

[THORA turns to OSCAR, makes a low cry of pain and helplessness, staggers and falls back unconscious.]

OSCAR.

[Kneeling and raising THORA.] Thora! Thora! My poor child!

ANNA, AUNT MARGRET and FACTOR rush in from verandah.

*Ann. M. 1.
Anna 2
Factor 3
Doctor 4
Gov. Rast.*

H

ANNA.

[*To HELGA.*] Mercy me! What have you done?

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Kneeling left.*] My precious, speak to me.

FACTOR.

[*Running back.*] Doctor! Doctor!

[*DOCTOR OLSEN, PASTOR and GOVERNOR rush in. Maid-servants from hall.*]

DOCTOR.

When did this happen?

OSCAR.

This moment.

DOCTOR.

Has she had a shock, a surprise?

OSCAR.

Not that I know of.

DOCTOR.

There's no time to lose. Let us take her to bed.

OSCAR.

[*Lifting THORA in his arms.*] My poor girl! My sweet Thora!

[*The men help him to carry THORA through opening—women following.* *up stairs*]

ANNA.

[*Following.*] I told her we were going to sit on the verandah. She must have been coming down to us.

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Following.*] What have they done to you, my precious? They shall suffer for it, my own—they shall, as sure as my name is Margret Neilson they shall!

[GOVERNOR closes curtain behind them and comes down to HELGA, who stands trembling on right.

GOVERNOR. *Going to Helga*

Helga, tell me what happened.

HELGA. *R.*

[*Nervous and confused.*] Magnus was with her while we were at dinner, and he seems to have said something about Oscar. It must have excited her terribly, and when she came downstairs——

[*A rumble of thunder. MAGNUS dashes in on right, his face white and drawn, his eyes wild, his hat in his hand, his hair disordered. HELGA stops with a half-stifled cry of fear, and creeps down right.*

MAGNUS.

[*Centre, hoarse and fierce.*] May I speak to you at once, sir?

GOVERNOR.

[*Harshly.*] No, a disaster has befallen the family—I have no time to talk of other matters.

Going left.

*while the
are sitting
there.*

MAGNUS. C.

But it's that I wish to speak about.

GOVERNOR.

Then you know what has happened?

MAGNUS.

I've just heard of it in the street. May I speak to you alone, sir?

GOVERNOR.

Leave us, Helga.

*[~~Helga~~ passage beside stairs
HELGA goes up fearfully. MAGNUS opens
curtains for her. She creeps out, trying to
avoid his steadfast gaze.*

GOVERNOR.

[Agitated, walking right and left.] You've been here before?

MAGNUS.

I have, sir.

GOVERNOR.

Then perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what you said to Thora that has thrown her into this dangerous condition of hysteria.

MAGNUS.

Have you ever signed your name to a bill on the Bank of Denmark for a hundred thousand crowns?

GOVERNOR. C

Good heavens, man, what has that got to do with it?

MAGNUS.

R. C.

It has, sir. Have you?

GOVERNOR.

Certainly not. I have never signed a bill in my life, and never shall. Why do you ask?

MAGNUS.

Because a bill for that amount is in town at this moment.

GOVERNOR.

Then it's a forgery—an impudent forgery—and the forger must be promptly punished. Who is he?

~~MAGNUS.~~~~That's what I want you to find out, sir.~~~~GOVERNOR.~~

~~Then whom is this extraordinary document drawn by? [MAGNUS is silent, turning his hat in his hands.] Don't you hear me? Who is it?~~

MAGNUS.

Oscar Stephensson.

GOVERNOR.

Oscar——?

MAGNUS.

Yes, sir.

GOVERNOR.

You tell me that Oscar—your brother Oscar—has committed a forgery? ~~Ah, that's what you mean—~~

~~don't deny it!~~ [MAGNUS drops his head.] So this is what you told that poor child just now! This is the shock, the surprise you gave her? I knew you were on bad terms with your brother—~~always have been since he put you to the humiliation of showing everybody how nobly he could behave to the dear girl you had shamed and degraded.~~ But that your jealousy and spite could express themselves in this trumpery story—this lying tale——

MAGNUS.

[*Bursting out.*] Father, what I tell you is the truth—it is God's truth, sir.

GOVERNOR.

[*Contemptuously.*] And this precious document—it is accepted in my name?

MAGNUS.

It is accepted in your name, sir, and witnessed in the name of the Factor.

GOVERNOR.

That too? And the paper is at present in town, you say?

MAGNUS.

It is, sir—an agent of the Bank has brought it over from Denmark.

GOVERNOR.

You have talked with this agent, no doubt?

MAGNUS.

The Sheriff brought him here to see you, sir.

GOVERNOR.

[*With a sneer.*] But you saw him yourself instead?
... And in the interests of the family you felt it
necessary to examine the signatures he showed you?
... And even to hint—only to hint—that perhaps
you could point to the forger?

[MAGNUS is silent, clutching his hat as if
struggling to control himself.]

Out on you, man, out on you! ~~I thought you~~
~~might be suffering from the delusions of drink, but you~~
~~are worse—you are drunk with hatred—hatred of~~
~~your own flesh and blood.~~ Aren't you ashamed to
stand before your father and parade the whole dia-
bolical catalogue of your unnatural passions?

MAGNUS.

[*Bursting out again.*] Father, you are a hot-
tempered man. I—I am your son. Take care.

GOVERNOR.

[*After a pause.*] You have seen the bill?

MAGNUS.

I have, sir.

GOVERNOR.

What reason had the Bank to suspect it was a
forgery?

MAGNUS.

It turns out that though the bill was drawn by
Oscar the business was done by a woman.

GOVERNOR.

A woman?

going up to
magnus

8

MAGNUS.

And that the money was paid to her at Nice.

GOVERNOR.

At last I understand everything! And it is worse—a hundred-fold worse—than I expected. You have led that unhappy child to believe ~~that her husband is not only a forger but an adulterer. Silence! That's what it comes to—~~ that Oscar has been in the hands of a woman—an infamous woman in the gambling-hells of Nice, and that she has led him on to crime. No wonder the shock fell on her like a thunderbolt. And if she dies—if she dies, I say—her blood will be on your head. *Oscar turns to Gov.*

MAGNUS.

For God's sake, father——

GOVERNOR.

[*Bearing him down.*] But I don't believe one word of this cock-and-bull story, and the best message I can send to Thora is to tell her it is a lie.

MAGNUS.

Hadn't you better speak to Oscar first, sir? *stepping up to Gov.*

GOVERNOR.

Certainly I'll speak to Oscar, and if I find—as I know I shall—that this accursed document is nothing but a trick—a conspiracy—let me never see you in this house again. [*He goes to opening and calls—* MAGNUS *coming down right of ottoman.*] Oscar! Oscar! Come here for one moment. You too, *moves up to mag.*

Fac. & Gov. down together

ACT II

THE PRODIGAL SON

121

Factor. The Pastor also—the more the better.
[Enter FACTOR and PASTOR, looking very grave.] How
is she now?

FACTOR. *Coming down R.*

She's herself, the doctor says.

PASTOR. *L. C.*

But it wouldn't take much to make her take flight
from this world, it seems.

GOVERNOR.

Coming to Factor R
[With a laugh.] Ah, but I've a word to say to her
that will keep her here, old friend. In two minutes'
time I shall be worth all the doctors in the world to
her, Neilsen.

[Enter OSCAR, very pale and dejected. He stands
centre. Another low rumble of thunder.]

GOVERNOR.

[Down left.] Oscar, I am sorry to trouble you at
such a moment of anxiety, but a false and vile story
which is being told about you in town has reached
the ears of Thora and been the cause of her present
seizure.

FACTOR.

[On ottoman.] About Oscar?

OSCAR. *C*

Father, if you mean——

GOVERNOR. *L C*

I'll tell you what I mean, Oscar. Magnus—your

brother Magnus—I am aware he is not on brotherly terms with you—Magnus has just been telling me—collect yourself for an utterly ridiculous story, Oscar—Magnus says that some time ago—while you were away, I suppose—you drew a bill on the Bank of Denmark for a hundred thousand crowns.

FACTOR.

A hundred thousand crowns!

GOVERNOR.

[Laughing again.] But that is not all. He says that on the back of this bill you signed my name as security.

FACTOR.

Your name, Stephen?

GOVERNOR.

More than that, he says you signed your father-in-law's name also as witness to my signature. *move down L*

FACTOR.

[Rising in anger.] Monstrous! Atrocious!

OSCAR.

Father, let me say at once—— *one step down*

moving up to GOVERNOR.

Wait, let me say at once I do not believe the ridiculous story and I do not ask you to discuss it. ~~But as every lie has its tail I ask you to contradict this~~ *it*

~~and~~ and leave me—[*looking askance at MAGNUS*—to deal with the slanderer as I think fit. - *Ann G L.*

OSCAR.

[*With an effort.*] Father——

GOVERNOR.

Don't hesitate! Preposterous as the story is, you must contradict for your wife's sake. As long as she believes it she cannot wish to live. Her husband is a criminal, the hand of the law is upon him, and neither her father nor your father can wish to raise one finger to save him.

FACTOR.

Not one finger!

GOVERNOR.

The poor girl is lying upstairs on the brink of life or death. A breath may quench, a word may quicken, the glimmer of life that is left. Speak it, Oscar, speak it and save her—no matter who may be degraded and shamed.

[*Silence. OSCAR is seen to be going through a violent struggle.*]

OSCAR.

[*With a cry.*] Would to God I could, father, but I can't—I can't!

GOVERNOR.

You can't? Why can't you?

OSCAR.

Because—because—what Magnus has told you—is true.

GOVERNOR.

You say it is—true?

Yes. ^{OSCAR}
one step forward.

FACTOR.

God help us!

GOVERNOR.

[*In a broken voice.*] You received that sum, and signed for it in your father's name? . . . your father-in-law's also? . . . one hundred thousand crowns? . . . What has become of the money?

OSCAR.

It was lost.

GOVERNOR.

Lost? You mean . . . gambled away in those unprincipled places abroad?

OSCAR.

Yes.

GOVERNOR.

[*Staggered backward.*] Lord God forgive us!

[*The DOCTOR returns—very grave.*

FACTOR.

You bring good news, Doctor?

Dear wife of Sofa business of appealing to Gov.

DOCTOR.

Good—and bad. The child is born and is doing well——

OSCAR.

But Thora?

DOCTOR.

The mother is gone. *Moves up stage on to verandah.*

OSCAR.

[*Dropping to his knees at end of sofa.*] Oh God!
My wife! My sweet young wife!

[*FACTOR sinks back on ottoman, GOVERNOR on sofa. MAGNUS drops his head into his breast. Another rumble of thunder with wild, wailing, tempestuous music. The DOCTOR and PASTOR go out right. AUNT MARGRET enters, wiping her eyes.*

AUNT MARGRET.

Her heart must have been broken. "I wish I could die," she said. *Stays up stage R. Pastor & Dr. exit.*

OSCAR.

Forgive me, my angel! Forgive me! Forgive me!

*Enter ANNA.*ANNA. *From sofa*

[*Standing over OSCAR, smoothing his face.*] My poor Oscar! My poor son!

OSCAR.

My sweet, innocent, long-suffering Thora! She is gone. I can never make amends. *Kneeling in front of Anna.*

FACTOR.

[Rising, speaking bitterly.] Make amends? Certainly you can never make amends. The death of this poor child is a part of the diabolical harvest we are reaping for your misdeeds. *Dear rises*

[OSCAR rises and stands like a prisoner receiving his sentence.]

ANNA.

Factor! What are you saying?

FACTOR. *Moving C.*

I am saying, Anna, that your son has killed my daughter—killed her, there is no other word for it.

ANNA.

Gracious heavens!

~~FACTOR.~~

~~He forged his father's name and mine to get money to gamble and waste. She heard of it at the most critical moment in a woman's life—and that was the moment when the law was waiting to convict him.~~

~~ANNA.~~

~~*[Coming down to GOVERNOR.]* Is it true?~~

FACTOR.

[Going up to OSCAR.] Perhaps, your father expects

that I will join him in discharging your debt, but I'll not give fifty thousand farthings to shield a criminal and cheat the law.

ANNA.

Old friend, a great bereavement has befallen all of us—is this a time for recriminations?

FACTOR. *L. C. to Anna*

Is it a time for mincing matters either? I have lost my daughter—am I to mix my tears with the man who has done her to death? Margret, let us go home. Helga—where are you?

goes up L.

HELGA. *At back L*

[*Coming out, white and fearful, in hat and cloak.*]
Yes, father.

FACTOR.

You've stayed long enough in this house. [*Taking up hat and gloves and moving towards door.*] I've seen something of gambling and I never knew it go alone. God knows what other trouble poisoned every hour of poor Thora's married life. Some other vice, some other woman——

GOVERNOR.

[*Rising as if by a sudden thought.*] Wait! Before Helga goes I have something else to say.

[*OSCAR drops his head, and MAGNUS goes up right and closes door.*]

goes up C.

(*Anna enters
R. to
F. to
M. to
O. to*)

FACTOR.

going up R.

Say it to your own, then, Stephen Magnusson, and leave mine to me. If I tell Helga to go, she *shall go.*

Moves to go

MAGNUS.

[*Back to door, in a voice of thunder.*] She shall stay!

[*HELGA falls back in terror, the FACTOR is silent.*

During Gov's speech Fac. mvt's down to his *R side*

GOVERNOR.

Oscar, in the story as I told it there was something forgotten. Though the deed was drawn by you, the business was transacted by a woman. If that means that somebody tempted you—somebody, perhaps, who helped you to lose and promised to help you to repay—tell me, and I will protect you in spite of everything. [*HELGA trembles visibly and watches OSCAR.*] I thought old friendships would not rust, but it's thin blood that isn't thicker than water, and I, too, must stand by my own. Your offence against the law is only an offence against me, and if I choose to forgive it the law can have nothing to say. I *will* forgive it—I will acknowledge this signature and pay the money without help from any one if you will speak out now. Speak, Oscar, did some woman put the device into your head? If so, who was it?

Stepping down to Oscar

OSCAR.

[*After an awful effort.*] I—I cannot blame anybody but myself, father—I have no right to do so.

GOVERNOR.

Right? Don't talk to me about right! Who was it? Was it—Helga?

Coming down left.

OSCAR.

[After another awful effort.] N—no! I will

[GOVERNOR drops back on sofa. HELGA shows relief.]

FACTOR.

stepping up to Gov.

[Contemptuously.] What other answer did you expect from him, Magnusson Stephensson? If Helga had been guilty of what you meant I should have gone to bed a childless man to-night—for one of my daughters is lost to me one way, and the other should never have come in adooors at my house again. But it only needed this vile innuendo to settle the account between you and me. It is settled! I draw the line through it, Stephen Magnusson! The account is closed!

3 steps up

[He goes out, hot and angry. AUNT MARGRET follows him. HELGA hesitates and waits.]

*Exit to
left door.*

GOVERNOR.

[Rising, with dignity and intense feeling.] Oscar Stephensson—

Coming to R.

ANNA.

Rising & going to Gov.

[Clinging to him.] Stephen—

GOVERNOR.

[Breaking away from ANNA and going up to OSCAR.] Oscar Stephensson, you have robbed me of the friend—

*Exit to
left door.*

I

ship of a lifetime and been the chief cause of the death of the dear girl who was too good to be your wife. You have disappointed me and deceived me, and chosen the downward path which leads to destruction—therefore you and I must part!

OSCAR.

~~[Covering his eyes with his arm.]~~ Father——! *Falls down on one knee.*

GOVERNOR.

As your honour is my honour I will satisfy the law if I have to pledge the last pennyworth of property I possess, and I will look to your motherless child as long as I live—but you must leave Iceland immediately.

OSCAR. *L. C.*

Father——! *Rises*

GOVERNOR. *C*

[In a breaking voice, struggling to be severe.] I shall not expect you to come back soon—I shall not expect you to come back at all. Inasmuch as you have done your best to wreck my happiness, I ask you to consider that henceforth our lives are to run in different courses. Go where you will, do what you please, be what you may—I wish to see your face no more. ~~That~~

~~Come to his arms.~~

OSCAR.

Father! Father!

[Smothering his emotion the GOVERNOR goes hurriedly into dining-room.] *with Anna*
OSCAR stands with both hands over his face. HELGA comes down to him. The cathedral bell begins to toll.

Anna goes to her room. Oscar is on one knee. Helga is trying to be brave & must be get out of the room. The cathedral bell begins to toll. Oscar looks both ways.

HELGA. Come down from ~~your seat~~ to Oscar.
(Rushes to door.)

[*In a low voice.*] Oscar, ~~let me show you my life-long gratitude.~~ Let me follow you; let us go away together. ~~Your objections must be gone now—~~ let us do as we intended. After this shameful cruelty of your father's and my father's—
knocking down in front of sofa.

OSCAR. (*rising*)

[*With a cry of pain.*] Helga, Helga, what are you saying? I deserve everything—everything and more—a hundred-fold more. Help me to pray for pardon, and God have mercy on both of us! [*The bell tolls louder.*] Thora, forgive me! I cannot live without your forgiveness. I wronged you and sinned against you, but you were good and your childlike heart was from God. Thora! Thora! Thora!

Helga sits on ottoman.

[*Blind with tears and choking with emotion he staggers out at back. up stairs L.C.*

FACTOR'S VOICE.

a servant.

[*Outside.*] Helga!

[*With drooping head she goes out right.*
 MAGNUS bursts into wild laughter. It has grown dark. There is a flash of lightning and a peal of thunder.

MAGNUS. *up stage C.*

What a devil's own world it is! What lying, shamming, canting hypocrisy! Did you hear her? She'll follow him—she who has been the first cause of all this trouble! They'll meet again in those gilded hells that were the beginning of all this misery!

Come down C.

ANNA. *Enter through inner room.*

No, no! It is impossible!

MAGNUS.

Did you hear my father too? He will acknowledge the signature! He will tell a lie to play into the hands of a forger! Oh, we stick at nothing to save our honour—our family honour!

ANNA.

Don't look at it like that, Magnus. Your father is acting for the best. Oscar——

MAGNUS.

My father will save him! And how will he save him? By making *me* pay the price of his rioting abroad! The Inn-Farm will be mortgaged to the last penny it is worth. I shall be ruined for the rest of my life. My own father will ruin me. And why? To save his other son—the son who has disgraced and cheated him! *(calls stage)* [Laughs bitterly.]

ANNA. *R*

Don't be so bitter about your father, Magnus. If it was you who told him that story perhaps he thought your heart was hard and your motive cruel.

MAGNUS.

[*In a low, breaking voice, putting his arms about ANNA.*] I loved her, mother.

ANNA. *Seated at sofa*

Magnus!

MAGNUS. *Wandering?*

I loved her, but she loved Oscar and I gave her up to him.

ANNA.

Is this the truth?

MAGNUS.

I gave her up to him that he might make her happy and be a better husband to her than I could be. Those were the terms on which I gave her up to him, and what is the result?

ANNA.

Now I understand so many things.

MAGNUS.

She is dead—there was no place left for her—and he is going away with the woman who has helped him to kill her.

ANNA. *Rising from kneeling position*

[*Comforting him.*] We must be very good to each other in future, Magnus. If your mother's love is all that is left to you it will last long, my son. You need not give it up to any one, and no one can take it away. After all a mother's love is best. And if you have to suffer for the sin of somebody else your mother must help you to bear it. She *will* help you as long as she lives, Magnus——

MAGNUS.

[*Not listening, his gaze averted, his eyes aflame.*] I said I would kill him!

ANNA.

Magnus!

MAGNUS. *Reaching*

Yes, by God, I said I would kill him!

ANNA. *Reaching*

No, no, no! Think of your mother, my son. I nursed you both when you were little ones, and if there should be bloodshed between you now——

MAGNUS.

[In wild rage, breaking out of ANNA's arms, going up stage, throwing down everything in his way, and snatching gun from wall.] Where is he? In that woman's arms perhaps! *up stage - gets gun.*

ANNA.

[Following him up.] What are you going to do?

MAGNUS.

Destroy everybody—sweep the whole damnable world to hell! *down stage*

ANNA. *up C*

[Clinging to him.] Magnus, you must not raise your hand to Oscar. He is your brother!

MAGNUS. *down C*

He is a liar, a forger, and a murderer, and before he leaves Iceland he must meet with me!

[He breaks out of his mother's arms and goes out through curtains.]

ANNA.

[*Following him up to staircase.*] God save both of them! Magnus! Magnus!

[*There are flashes of lightning and loud peals of thunder. The tolling of the cathedral bell, and the roll of the organ. Then darkness and the Tableau.*

[*The Tableau represents the death-chamber. All peaceful and beautiful. THORA lies as if asleep with candles burning above her. At the foot of her bed OSCAR is kneeling with his face buried in the bed-clothes and his body shaken by sobs. The organ is faintly heard, playing a Requiem. The door of the room is burst open, and MAGNUS enters with wild eyes, the gun in his hands. He sees THORA, then OSCAR, and stops suddenly as if an unseen hand out of Heaven had seized him. The choir in the cathedral begins to sing. There is a breathless moment. Then MAGNUS drops to his knees and the gun falls to the floor.*

MAGNUS.

[*With stifling sobs, and a great burst of relief.*]
Thank God! Thank God!

Business not called out
the father

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE represents the interior of a Casino on the Riviera.

A gorgeous, gilded, somewhat bizarre set of rooms. The outer room is the Hall, the inner one the Gambling-room. Beyond these the terrace, and beyond the terrace the sea. On left of Hall an open staircase leads to Opera House; on right an arch to the Ball-room. Above the arches that divide the Hall from Gambling-room are two galleries, which cross from Opera House to Ball-room. The scene is constructed chiefly of glass. The Hall is furnished with round tables and chairs. Two of these are set well down, right and left, and are surrounded by foliage and glass screens.

It is the night of the Rose Ball on the mid-Lent night of Carnival. When the curtain rises the Orchestra in the Opera House is playing the last passages of a comic opera, and many voices are singing a crashing chorus. Servants in bright liveries are hurrying to and fro. Chorus ends and audience of gaily dressed people come out on staircase and galleries. Servants fetch armsful of dominoes and assist people to put them on. The dominoes are in various tints of rose-colour. It is a bright and merry scene.

A trumpet sounds, a band strikes up on right, the people cry "The Dance," and hurry out. When the Hall is empty the glass door on right is closed and the music dies down. Then two men enter by door left—OSCAR STEPHENSSON and DOCTOR OLSEN.

OSCAR.

[*Indicating seats on right.*] Let us sit here, Doctor.

DOCTOR.

We shall not be disturbed ?

OSCAR.

[*Sitting.*] Not for a while, at all events. The theatre is empty, the people have passed into the Ball-room, and the gaming tables—[*indicating room at back*—are not yet open.

DOCTOR.

Then, under four eyes, as we say in Iceland, we can talk a little.

OSCAR.

[*Rising uneasily.*] Doctor, you have come to tell me something ?

DOCTOR.

I left Iceland for health and holiday, but I have searched you out on purpose.

OSCAR.

Somebody has gone—somebody else has followed Thora ?

DOCTOR.

Pull yourself together, Oscar.

OSCAR.

Is it—the child?

DOCTOR.

No.

OSCAR.

Then it is my father?

DOCTOR.

Yes.

OSCAR.

[*Sinking down.*] I knew it was! And I've killed him! I've killed him!

[*He drops his head on his hands. The sound of dance music comes from Ball-room.*]

DOCTOR.

[*Taking a letter from his pocket.*] Here is a letter from your mother—it will tell you everything.

OSCAR.

[*After looking at letter, while music continues.*] He died happy, they say?

DOCTOR.

Quite happy.

OSCAR.

Forgiving me, too?

DOCTOR.

[*Taking a watch from his fob.*] I was with him at the end. He sent you this for a keepsake.

OSCAR.

His own watch!

DOCTOR.

"It may be a safeguard against sin," he said, "and save my poor son from further sorrow some day."

OSCAR.

[*Taking watch with great tenderness.*] My poor father! Dead—far away in Iceland!

[*Shouts and laughter mingle with music from Ball-room.* OSCAR puts watch in his pocket.

OSCAR.

But my mother is alive, thank God!

DOCTOR.

[*Doubtfully.*] Alive—yes.

OSCAR.

[*Eagerly.*] Is she sick?

DOCTOR.

Sick in fortune, at all events. When the Governor died everything had to be sold up.

OSCAR.

Everything?

DOCTOR.

Everything! And then Anna went to live with Magnus at the farm.

OSCAR.

So Magnus is living at the Inn-Farm still?

DOCTOR.

If you call it living—up to his eyes in debt.

OSCAR.

In debt, you say?

DOCTOR.

In debt to the Bank for the interest and principal of the money your father borrowed on mortgage.

OSCAR.

God forgive me!

[Shouts of noisy laughter, with clapping of hands; then dance music as before.]

OSCAR.

But the child?

DOCTOR.

Little Elin?

OSCAR.

They've called her Elin, have they? She's alive and well?

DOCTOR.

Alive and well and hearty.

OSCAR.

Elin! My little Elin! She'll be quite a big girl by this time?

DOCTOR.

Five years old in autumn, and the brightest little sunbeam in the world.

OSCAR.

Resembles her mother, does she?

DOCTOR.

She couldn't possibly be more like her mother and be so wonderfully like her father also.

OSCAR.

Like me you say?

DOCTOR.

Very, and when she sings——

OSCAR.

She sings too?

DOCTOR.

She's always singing, just as you were when you were a boy; and when we close our eyes we can tell no difference.

OSCAR.

My sweet child! My poor, motherless darling! What I would give to see her!

DOCTOR.

[*Eagerly.*] Then why shouldn't you?

OSCAR.

It is impossible.

DOCTOR.

Why impossible? It might require some courage to return after what has happened, but Nature is a mighty powerful thing, and when a man has a lodestar like that leading him home——

OSCAR.

If it could only be!

DOCTOR.

At a time like this too—your father dead, your mother a widow, your brother borne down by the debt that was contracted to save you, and your child—your own child—needing you——

OSCAR.

[*Rising.*] If I might—if I dare!

DOCTOR.

[*Rising too, coming close hand in hand.*] Dare to be a man, Oscar, and do your duty whatever it may cost you. If it is shame—face it. If it is pride—crush it. If it is love——

OSCAR.

Hush!

[*Sounds of singing to the music within. The DIRECTOR, an elderly, bald-headed Frenchman with waxed moustache, enters from right.*

DIRECTOR.

Ah, M. Stephensson!

OSCAR.

Allow me—the Director of the Casino—a friend from Iceland.

DIRECTOR.

Delighted! A friend from Iceland, you say? Then a friend of Mademoiselle Neilson's also?

OSCAR.

Yes.

DIRECTOR.

You come in the very nick of time, sir. Your beautiful countrywoman has this moment been awarded the first banner for dress and deportment.

DOCTOR.

Charming!

DIRECTOR.

She carried off the banner for beauty at the beginning, and in the grand tableau at the end she is to play the principal part in the Triumph of Venus. You must certainly stay to see it, sir, for it will be the triumph of your countrywoman as well.

DOCTOR.

[*Crossing right.*] Meantime I'll step into the gallery of the Ball-room and come back presently.

[*Doctor goes out right. Singing within swells up and dies down.*]

DIRECTOR.

[*Rubbing his hands.*] Everything goes well! This Rose Ball was your idea, you know. But where is your own domino, dear friend?

OSCAR.

I'm not dancing to-night, Director.

DIRECTOR.

Not to-night, either? Take care! Your fascinating sister-in-law will be carried away from you.

OSCAR.

Where is she now?

DIRECTOR.

With M. Finsen and her delightful chaperone.

OSCAR.

With him again, is she?

DIRECTOR.

What wonder? When the general deserts the citadel what wonder if the enemy takes possession of it?

OSCAR.

I'm tired, and feel as if I want to fly from everything.

DIRECTOR.

Tut! Why should you? What is M. Finsen? The impresario who provides the house with opera.

What is your sister-in-law? The beautiful and bewitching singer who expects to be prima-donna some day. What are you? Merely the accomplished but obscure musician who conducts the orchestra. [OSCAR *shrugs his shoulders and goes up.*] The game is unequal, and the lovely lady knows where the odds lie. What of that? Ought you to retire from the contest? Not if you know it. Ambition means success, and success means money. [*Laughs.*] Get money in your purse, dear friend, and when you've got that you've got everything.

OSCAR.

[*Coming back.*] You mean—the tables?

DIRECTOR.

Why not? [*Confidentially.*] The house likes to see you take the bank and it would be sorry to see you down. The luck has been against you lately, but what matter? You try again—make a great success—a rapid run—a quick retreat—and lo, the lovely creature is your own!

[*The music bursts out afresh, and a chain of men and girls—the first and last carrying banners—dance across the lower gallery from right to left, singing a chorus to the music within. At the same moment the doors open on right and there enter HELGA, carrying a large silk banner, MDME. PANDHER, a fashionable and handsome woman, and NEILS FINSEN, a young man in the red coat and black silk breeches of a Judge of Carnival.*

K

DIRECTOR.

Ah, my dear mademoiselle! and madame! and M. Finsen! I am just telling M. Stephenson that the Rose Ball might be a fête in honour of his captivating kinswoman, for she is carrying off all the honours.

FINSEN.

All the banners, at all events—we're dropping them round like rain.

HELGA.

Where shall I drop this one?

DIRECTOR.

[*Taking banner and fixing it to chair right.*] Permit me. This will be the chair of Venus in the grand procession at the close. So when mademoiselle sits in it, surrounded by her trophies——

FINSEN.

Capital!

MADAME PANDHER.

But mademoiselle, indeed! Oscar, what do you think was the name in which the judges awarded them?

OSCAR.

What?

MADAME PANDHER.

Madame Finsen, if you please.

HELGA.

Nonsense, dear.

OSCAR.

[*Bitterly.*] But why not? Only a little premature perhaps!

[FINSSEN and MDME. PANDHER *laugh*. HELGA *looks at* OSCAR. *The chain of men and girls re-cross upper gallery from left to right, singing and dancing as before. At same moment a trumpet is sounded.*

DIRECTOR.

[*Crossing right.*] The cotillion! I must go back. [*Exit.*

MADAME PANDHER.

We must all go back. Coming, Helga?

HELGA.

Not yet, dear.

MADAME PANDHER.

But, my stars, I wouldn't miss a moment——

FINSSEN.

[*Offering his arm.*] Then I may, perhaps——

MADAME PANDHER.

[*Taking it.*] My good man, you're a godsend!

Exit FINSSEN and MADAME PANDHER into Ball-room. Music dies down. HELGA approaches OSCAR.

HELGA.

You've had news, Oscar—bad news. What is it?

OSCAR.

My father is dead.

HELGA.

Your father?

OSCAR.

Doctor Olsen is here. He brought me a letter.

HELGA.

What do you intend to do?

OSCAR.

To go back.

HELGA.

Back to Iceland?

OSCAR.

Yes, to my mother and my child.

[*Silence for a moment. HELGA returns to chair right. OSCAR follows her.*]

OSCAR.

Helga, why shouldn't you go with me? Why shouldn't we go back together? I know it is a good deal to ask, dear, but we should be everything to each other, and I should make it up to you for every sacrifice by my devotion and love. What matter if we have to forget our cherished dreams and aspirations? Life is the fulfilment of duty, and our duty is at home. Mine is, at all events, and if you will share it, if you will go back with me——

HELGA.

I'm sorry, but it is impossible—quite impossible.

OSCAR.

Don't say that, Helga.

HELGA.

I must—I cannot help myself. If I had nothing else to think about there is Neils. He has helped me to my training—my teachers and so forth—and I have given a contract, a business contract.

OSCAR.

[*Returning left.*] Then I must go alone. We haven't got along very well lately, Helga, and I thought perhaps this bereavement might bring us together. But if it cannot be it cannot, and I must go back without you.

HELGA.

Oscar !

OSCAR.

It will be hard, terribly hard, I know that quite well. But there is the mortgage—I must take up that burden now that my father is gone ; I cannot let anybody else be borne down by it. And then there is the child—I've not done much for her hitherto, God knows, and it is my duty, my solemn and sacred duty——

HELGA.

[*Rising.*] The child is all right, Oscar. Anna will look after her. As for the mortgage, you can bear that burden just as well here as in Iceland. Better—far better ! You can earn more money in a

place like this—ten times, a hundred times more. And then—[*getting closer and speaking in a low tone*]—think of the difficulty of beginning again under the old conditions. Everybody must know everything by this time. They do—I'm sure they do. And if you go back now—now that your father's death must have revealed all secrets——

OSCAR.

[*Shuddering and sitting left.*] Oh, I know! I know!

HELGA.

[*Standing beside him.*] Then think a little of me, too, Oscar. Remember what they said about me in Iceland at the time the trouble came and I followed you to England. It was false—stupidly false—but my own father was the first to believe it. Everybody believes it now, and there isn't anybody at home who will ever mention my name again.

OSCAR.

[*Dropping one arm and taking HELGA's hand.*] Helga!

HELGA.

You cannot leave me after a sacrifice like that—especially now when I want your help so badly. The years and years of weary work are nearly over, and they must bring me out before long, you know. Even to-night's little triumph will do something for me, and when I make my *débüt* as Marguerite or Juliette the people will remember that I was the girl who was crowned at the ball. [*She stands behind his chair and*

puts her arms about his neck.] But nothing and nobody can do as much for me as you can, dear. You can make me an artiste if you will, Oscar, with your praise, your power, your inspiration. And then perhaps my bad, bad boy will at last—at long, long last—consent to be true to himself and his genius, and write the great works I *know* he can write, and let me sing them throughout the world. [*Softly, caressingly, dropping her face to his face.*] Say you will not leave me now, Oscar! Say you will not!

OSCAR.

[*Lifting her hand to his lips.*] I belong to you body and soul—do as you please with me, Helga.

HELGA.

Then you will stay with me?

OSCAR.

Yes.

[*HELGA kisses him joyfully. A loud burst of laughter comes from the Ball-room. OSCAR rises. Liveried servants enter right and left, and light up and prepare gambling-room. FINSSEN and MADAME PANDHER re-enter.*

HELGA.

How goes the cotillion?

MADAME PANDHER.

[*Fanning herself.*] Splendidly! But the people in the gallery find the dancing stupid and prefer the fun at the tables.

FINSEN.

Here they come—their highnesses, serenities, excellencies and all the rest of it.

[A curious and grotesque company of all kinds and conditions come out right and pass into the Gambling-room. The deadened sound of laughter and music continues to come from the Ball-room.]

HELGA.

Neils knows everybody—let him tell us who they are.

MADAME PANDHER.

Yes, all their names and naughty histories.

FINSEN.

[As people pass.] That wicked-looking old man with the ghastly eyes is the Earl of Southdowns. He's on his last legs, poor devil, yet he sticks to the tables like a cat to hot bricks.

HELGA.

One can see he has been through a good deal.

MADAME PANDHER.

Ten thousand this season, they say.

FINSEN.

That pretty little woman is Lady Slingstone.

MADAME PANDHER.

She does too—I know the creature !

FINSEN.

That's the old Countess of Greengage, and the boyish fellow by her side is young Spooney of the Lancers. That's Algy Suckling, and this is the Hon. Harry Pigeon, and this dressy man is their friend, Captain Rook, who is said to hocus them at cards.

OSCAR.

[*Impatiently rising.*] And so on, and so on, through all the neurotic criminals of the upper classes—all the heights and depths of harlotry—in the high court of the devil's democracy.

FINSEN.

Nonsense, old fellow! With your highly developed sense of justice you are bound to admit that the gambling-room includes every kind and condition.

[*A middle-aged man of good appearance passes through.*]

There now—there's an American Senator, one of the best brains and finest characters in his country, but a gambler to the very grain. He won fifteen thousand at the tables last night, and looks as if he felt lucky enough to win fifteen more to-night.

[*An elderly man of shabby appearance passes through.*]

OSCAR.

And there's a stranded derelict—one of the gamblers who have gone through their money and are waiting for remittances to take them home.

MADAME PANDHER.

Tell me—do you never hear of a man killing himself when he's down on his luck like that?

OSCAR.

[*Laughing bitterly.*] Never! A man may shoot himself certainly when he has lost his last louis, but the coroner is a man of compassionate conscience and he smuggles the suicide out of our sight. That's the way in this world of fashionable wreckers, with its false lights to lure frail vessels on to the rocks! No lifeboats here! If you strike you go to the bottom and nobody a penny the wiser.

FINSSEN.

But gambling, dear boy, isn't worse than some other forms of social wreckage—drink, for instance, or love. One gleam of the dark eye of the girl who loves you less than she loves herself—one curl of her soft arm about your neck—one kiss of her red lips on your cheek or your hand, and away goes duty—away goes honour—and smash, crash, down you go!

OSCAR.

[*Suddenly serious.*] Just so! [*Excitedly.*] And to show you how much I meant what I said I'm going to follow your advice. [*Crossing to centre, laughing.*] Get money in your purse, and when you've got that you've got everything!

HELGA.

What are you going to do?

OSCAR.

[*Laughing again.*] Lay my last louis against the Senator's fifteen thousand. The luck has been against me lately, but what of that? I'll try again—make a great success—a rapid run—a quick retreat——

MADAME PANDHER.

[*Eagerly, taking OSCAR's arm.*] Bless you, my man! Let me follow your luck—I've had none of it for ages. . . . But if we lose?

OSCAR.

[*Laughing immoderately.*] Then—smash, crash, down we go!

[*OSCAR and MADAME PANDHER go up to Gambling-room, where the game has now begun. Lights lowered in Hall, but bright over tables. The American SENATOR in banker's chair. Murmurs, voices of croupiers, an occasional hand-clap for silence are the only sounds within, but the faint hum of music and dancing comes from Ball-room.*

FINSEN.

[*In a low tone.*] What is wrong with him?

HELGA.

[*Also in low tone.*] He has had bad news from Iceland. His father is dead. He wants to go home.

FINSEN.

[*Eagerly.*] Let him go.

HELGA.

You wish to get rid of him.

FINSEN.

Is that wonderful ?

HELGA.

Yet you brought him here yourself.

FINSEN.

That was only to bring you. But I'm beginning to be tired of this triple alliance. He gives himself the airs of a relation and the authority of a guardian, and when he is about nobody would guess that there's anything between us.

HELGA.

And is there ?

FINSEN.

Well, no, you always keep me apart, worse luck. Let him go home, Helga.

HELGA.

[*Going up centre, laughing softly.*] And what if I go with him ?

FINSEN.

You can't ! I mean—after I've spent all this time and money you can't run away from me like that.

HELGA.

So I'm bound to you hand and foot ?

FINSEN.

Morally bound.

HELGA.

And legally too?

FINSEN.

Well, yes, legally too, if you like. But even if you were not you couldn't think of such a thing. It isn't conceivable that you wish to marry him.

HELGA.

[*Laughing, coming down to chair left.*] No, that isn't conceivable, is it?

FINSEN.

A girl in your position can't wish to marry anybody at present—least of all a poor devil who is down to his last louis. You only want to have two strings to your bow.

HELGA.

[*Laughing.*] That's it—two strings to my bow.

FINSEN.

Trust yourself to one, Helga, and you will see what I shall do. I'll give you every chance, every opportunity, and your voice—your wonderful voice will do the rest.

HELGA.

And then I shall be more than ever bound hand and foot to you—more than ever in your power!

FINSEN.

Believe me, I shall never abuse it.

HELGA.

[*Rising, crossing to chair right, looking shyly aside.*] Yet all the same I shall belong to you, body and soul, you know.

FINSEN.

Why not—when the time comes? [*Approaching her and speaking passionately.*] How lovely you look to-night, Helga!

HELGA.

Don't speak so loud.

FINSEN.

[*Softly.*] I'm longing for the end of the evening when I shall see you in all your loveliness, with your naked arms, and soft smooth neck, shoulder high on this chair and all the people pelting flowers at you.

HELGA.

[*Pleased but pretending to frown.*] Hush!

FINSEN.

[*Getting closer.*] I'll hate to see it though, I know that, for I'll want to feel that we are alone, quite alone for the first time——

HELGA.

Hush! Hush!

FINSEN.

[*Still closer.*] It makes me light-headed to think of it, for I'm sure that I shall forget that you are not mine, mine only——

HELGA.

You are forgetting already.

FINSEN.

[*Laying hold of her.*] Who wouldn't, with this thumping at his heart, this burning in his blood——

[*OSCAR is seen coming down from tables at back.*]

HELGA.

Neils!

FINSEN.

You enchanting creature!

HELGA.

Neils! Neils!

FINSEN.

[*Kissing her.*] Darling!

[*OSCAR re-enters. He pretends to have heard and seen nothing.*]

FINSEN.

[*Awkwardly.*] Well, are we to congratulate you?

OSCAR.

[*Laughing.*] Of course you are.

FINSEN.

You've won, then?

OSCAR.

Not I—I've lost. The cursed knave turned up and

everything was gone in an instant. [*Laughing again and looking from FINSSEN to HELGA.*] Well, why don't you congratulate me?

FINSSEN.

A man doesn't want to be congratulated when he has lost his last louis.

OSCAR.

[*Slapping him on the shoulder as he goes left and sits on arm of chair.*] Doesn't he? That's where he's wrong, then. If you've got to lose, the best luck is to lose quick and have done with it. It saves time and nerve—not to speak of heart and hope. Gambling is like love in that respect, old fellow. Say you stake everything you have on a woman—one who loves you less than she loves herself, you know—and the knave turns up to take her. Isn't it better to find out at once what is going on under your nose than to live in a fool's paradise of false hopes and expectations?

[*He laughs bitterly.* HELGA looks angry,
FINSSEN confused.

FINSSEN.

Oh, I daresay——

OSCAR.

[*Rising quickly.*] What do you say?

FINSSEN.

[*Contemptuously.*] When a man has your knowledge, your experience—when he has been married himself—to that sort of woman, I suppose—having taken her from somebody else, perhaps——

OSCAR.

[*Stepping up.*] Stop that! Say what you like about me, but let my wife lie in her grave. Though she dead she's mine, and I'll not have you, or the likes of you, lay your tongue on her name if I know it! The only women a man like you has a right to jabber about are the women who haunt this little hellish world, and everybody knows what they are.

FINSSEN.

Really? In that case it isn't necessary to say anything more on the subject. [*Turning and offering his arm to HELGA.*] Coming to try your luck, Helga?

HELGA.

[*Rising and taking his arm.*] Gladly!

[*They go up to tables. OSCAR flings himself down in chair left, takes out letter and reads.*

OSCAR.

[*Reading.*] "This is to tell you that our father died this morning. I think he died happy.—MAGNUS." —"He loved you to the last and we have buried him next to our dear Thora.—MOTHER."

[*His voice breaks and his head falls on to his breast. The music in Ball-room swells up as the door right opens and DOCTOR OLSEN returns.*

OSCAR.

[*Rising, smuggling letter in pocket.*] Ah, Doctor! What do you think of our rackety little paradise

L

now? We're merry enough here—infernally merry, aren't we?

DOCTOR.

[*Looking towards Gambling-room.*] Did you see a miserable-looking man pass through—terribly down and shabby?

OSCAR.

I did. I've often seen him hanging about the tables. We call him the stranded derelict.

DOCTOR.

Oscar, that was a college chum of your father's.

OSCAR.

Of my father's?

DOCTOR.

Yes—Eric Arnasson, son of the old Sheriff of Aukeyeri.

OSCAR.

[*Hoarsely.*] I remember. He gambled away the little family fortune, didn't he?

DOCTOR.

He did worse than that, Oscar.

OSCAR.

Worse?

DOCTOR.

[*Sitting, right.*] He touched me for twenty francs in the gallery just now, but I think his tale was worth the money.

OSCAR.

[*Sitting.*] What was it ?

DOCTOR.

When he had come to the bottom, and hadn't a brass farthing left, his conscience awoke and he wanted to go home. But what right had he to take back his poverty to the people he had impoverished ?

OSCAR.

Just so !

DOCTOR.

It was then—when the world seemed to be tumbling about his ears—when he was in the depths and in the far country—thinking of home, his father, his mother, his wife, his child—it was then that the worst temptation came to him.

OSCAR.

The worst temptation ?

DOCTOR.

The temptation to cheat at cards—at the tables.

OSCAR.

But is it possible ?

DOCTOR.

Only too easy in a crooked gambling-house, it seems. A little understanding with the manager, a little hint to the croupier, and everything is arranged.

OSCAR.

What did he do ?

DOCTOR.

Nothing. The brazen dealer worked the double slip-cut—he only stood responsible.

OSCAR.

What was the result ?

DOCTOR.

Twenty years of playing scapegoat—skulking in slums, hiding his face from the faces of his friends—his name wiped out, his identity lost—dead and gone to all the world except himself.

OSCAR.

Merciful heavens !

DOCTOR.

According to the gambler's code of honour he had been guilty of the basest conduct a man can be capable of.

OSCAR.

So he had !

DOCTOR.

When a man descends to that there is only one end left for him. He goes down and down, day by day, until he is submerged beneath the flood, and becomes, but for the mercy of God, a vagabond and a castaway.

OSCAR.

How can he go on living?

DOCTOR.

You may well ask that. Life must be unendurable and existence an everlasting hell.

OSCAR.

It must require some courage to live on under such circumstances.

DOCTOR.

That depends on how one takes it. I'm a sort of a Christian man myself, save the mark, but I say it would be more courageous to make an end altogether.

OSCAR.

It would be better to die, perhaps.

DOCTOR.

Far better—better for everybody. [*Rising, approaching OSCAR and speaking significantly.*] If I had a friend who chose to live on after he had fallen into a disgrace like that I should tell his people he was dead and buried. [*Looking up.*] There he is—going through the crowd like a haunting ghost, a symbol to every man on the downward path of what he is and has been.

OSCAR.

Yes, yes, when a man has sunk so low if he wants to live he has to die!

[*Murmurs at back, "Carte," "Baccarat," etc.*

DOCTOR.

[*Going up.*] Listen to them! A house like this is a perilous place to a man with his pockets full of money, but it is ten times more dangerous to the man with his pockets empty.

[*DOCTOR goes up to tables. OSCAR sits alone, staring in front.*]

OSCAR.

"It is ten times more dangerous to the man with his pockets empty." [*Pauses, looks round.*] "I should tell his people he was dead and buried." [*Rises, wipes his forehead.*] I'll go home first! But how can I? Gone—all gone! [*By a sudden thought he takes the watch from his pocket.*] My father's watch! No, no! Impossible! [*Puts watch back and walks restlessly to left.*] Yet why not? [*A light breaks on him; he smiles sadly.*] "It may be a safeguard against sin, and save my poor son from further suffering some day." [*Takes out watch again.*] I'll do it! I'll do it! It is my father's hand out of heaven! My father's hand to snatch me from this hell!

[*Door on right opens quickly and DIRECTOR returns, rubbing his hands.*]

DIRECTOR.

Just been superintending the final preparations for our grand tableau of the Triumph of Venus! And now, my dear colleague, I've a word to say to you.

OSCAR.

[*Meeting him.*] And I've a word to say to you,

Director —will you lend me five hundred francs on this fine old repeater?

DIRECTOR.

With pleasure! [*Taking out notes.*] Here they are —one, two, three, four, five!

OSCAR.

[*Holding watch and hesitating.*] I'll want it back, remember.

DIRECTOR.

Whenever you please.

OSCAR.

Soon, perhaps.

DIRECTOR.

At the close of your next coup, if you like.

OSCAR.

[*Giving watch and taking money.*] There'll be no next coup for me, my friend. I'm borrowing this money to take me home.

DIRECTOR.

You are not thinking of going away?

OSCAR.

I am.

DIRECTOR.

What is M. Finsen to do?

OSCAR.

To do without me, Director.

DIRECTOR.

Our season isn't over yet?

OSCAR.

[*Taking out gloves and putting one of them on.*] But my money is.

DIRECTOR.

[*Confidentially.*] Listen for a moment. This is exactly the subject I came to speak about. [*Looks around, then in a low voice.*] M. Stephenson, I told you the House liked to see you take the bank. The game is good when you are in the chair. Now there's a gentleman here to-night who would play high if he had the proper inducement. M. Stephenson, I suggest that you go up to the table and take the bank now.

OSCAR.

I?

DIRECTOR.

You! When you call for fresh counters they will be provided.

OSCAR.

[*Laughing.*] So you run this house on philanthropic lines, do you?

DIRECTOR.

Hush! When you bid for the bank you'll bid high.

OSCAR.

I'll bid high—will I?

DIRECTOR.

Undoubtedly. And when you take it you'll call for fresh cards.

OSCAR.

I'll call for fresh cards?

DIRECTOR.

You'll call for fresh cards, as you've a right to do. And when you serve them *you will win*. Do you understand me? You will win!

OSCAR.

[*Thunderstruck.*] I'll win!

DIRECTOR.

Once—twice—thrice! But at the end of your third coup—your third—you'll rise from the table.

OSCAR.

[*Gasping.*] And then?

DIRECTOR.

[*Rubbing his hands.*] Then you'll divide your winnings with the House, and be richer than you've ever been in your life before.

OSCAR.

[*Flaring up and smiting the DIRECTOR across the face with his loose glove.*] What in the devil's name do you take me for? Take that—and that!

[*The DIRECTOR cries out in surprise at the blow. The people at tables rise and come down in confusion.*

VOICES.

What is it? What has happened?

DIRECTOR.

[*Recovering himself and trying to smile.*] It's nothing! The gentleman misunderstood something I was saying to him. I beg of you to resume the play.

[*All go up except DIRECTOR, who goes out by door to Opera House, and HELGA, who comes down to OSCAR, where he is leaning against table left.*

HELGA.

Oscar, tell me what occurred.

OSCAR.

He wanted me to cheat.

HELGA.

To cheat?

OSCAR.

To cheat at the tables and divide the plunder with the House.

[*HELGA sits left, OSCAR walks restlessly to and fro.*

OSCAR.

This is what I have come down to, Helga. A man can think it safe to make a proposal to me like that! The scoundrel!

HELGA.

[*Looking back.*] Hush!

OSCAR.

Can you wonder that I want to get out of this place—this atmosphere of cheats and cheating? I felt as if I couldn't live here another day, and I was preparing to go——

HELGA.

You were going without me?

OSCAR.

[*Coming back to her.*] Do you mean that, Helga? Really mean it? In spite of everything? Then come with me now. How can I leave you behind in a place like this? It will destroy you as it has destroyed others. It will sap away your health, your beauty, your talent, your charm—everything a woman wants to keep.

HELGA.

Calm yourself, Oscar.

OSCAR.

Yes, yes, I am nearly distracted, but I know what I'm saying, Helga; and if you will throw in your lot with me—with me only—I will devote my whole life to your welfare, and do everything you wish. If there is anything you want me to do, I will do it. Do you understand me, Helga?

HELGA.

Yes, Oscar.

OSCAR.

No, no, you can't! How can you? Shall I tell you? I will! [*He returns to her, goes down on one knee by her side, puts an arm about her chair, and whispers excitedly.*] You have asked me why in the five years since I fled from Iceland I have done nothing of all you expected me to do, and I've never been able to answer you, but I'll answer you now. It is because I had made a vow.

HELGA.

A vow?

OSCAR.

Not to write another line of music as long as I lived. It was on the night when Thora died. I had flung myself down at the foot of her bed. My young wife was dead—I couldn't grasp it. Something had killed her—I couldn't understand it. Then in that dizzy hour of pain and shame it seemed to me that I had sacrificed her precious life to my delirious dream of becoming a great composer, for it was that—that first—which brought you and me together.

HELGA.

[*Hoarsely.*] Well?

OSCAR.

Then I asked myself what punishment I could impose, and I heard but one answer—I could bury my delirious dream of greatness in the grave of the sweet girl it had destroyed.

HELGA.

So it was that——

OSCAR.

Yes, and since then—since I came here—and music has been calling me—calling me like a siren—out of my poverty and obscurity into the glory of success and fame, sometimes I've found myself—I've found myself praying——

HELGA.

Praying!

OSCAR.

Yes, even here—in this hell—that some one could say, “Oscar Stephensson is dead—poor devil, he is dead!”—so that people could believe it, and I could begin again under some other name—no matter what—at the only work I'm fit for, though the world never knew me, and I remained to the end of my life unknown.

HELGA.

How morbid! How miserable!

OSCAR.

[*Rising excitedly.*] Ah, but that's all over now. I want to share my life with you, Helga. I'll put aside my vow too! Everything for your dear sake. I see what we have to do—we have to go back to London. We may be poor, we may have to deny ourselves, but we'll think nothing of that. We'll write an opera; the scene will be our own dear country; the story will be one of the fiery sagas of that stern old land. And when, after many days, many weeks, many months, years perhaps, we have finished our task,

you will sing it everywhere and be worshipped throughout the world !

[*HELGA stares in front of her. OSCAR walks right and back.*]

OSCAR.

[*More rapidly, more excitedly.*] Then we'll go home—to your father, my mother, the child ! We couldn't go back poor and ashamed, but everything will be forgiven, everything forgotten in the dazzling light of success. Oh, Helga, Helga ! The joy of it all ! Don't you hear me, Helga ?

HELGA.

[*Slowly.*] Yes, Oscar.

OSCAR.

Then let us go to London immediately—to our own world, our own work.

HELGA.

I should like to—dearly like to.

OSCAR.

Then why shouldn't we ?

HELGA.

If I go to London with you I must break with Finsen, and I am in Finsen's debt.

OSCAR.

Ah !

HELGA.

It gives him such a frightful hold of me.

OSCAR.

You don't mean that you are in this man's power for the rest of your life, Helga?

HELGA.

Until I can pay him back what he has spent on me, yes. But if there were any way of getting money! If, for example——

OSCAR.

Helga, what are you thinking of?

HELGA.

I am thinking that if this is an atmosphere of cheats and cheating, perhaps you have been cheated also.

OSCAR.

No doubt, no doubt!

HELGA.

[*Rising.*] Then would it——

OSCAR.

What?

HELGA.

[*Crossing to chair right.*] Would it be wrong——

OSCAR.

[*Following her.*] Would what be wrong, Helga?

HELGA.

To do to them as they have done to you?

OSCAR.

[*Recoiling.*] Helga!

HELGA.

[*Sitting.*] I suppose it would, but they deserve it—richly deserve it.

OSCAR.

[*Visibly tempted.*] Don't let us think of it, Helga.

HELGA.

It seems so cruel to be stopped merely for the want of money—one's own money as one might say.

OSCAR.

Don't! Don't!

HELGA.

Otherwise how happy we should be if we could go to London together, and live for each other, and for our art, and have nothing and nobody else to think about!

OSCAR.

[*Visibly yielding.*] Yes, how happy we should be!

HELGA.

We should marry, of course. There is no longer any impediment, and it would put an end to damaging misconceptions.

OSCAR.

Yes, yes, yes !

HELGA.

It would put an end to Finsen, too, for he is constantly trying me and tempting me.

OSCAR.

[*Fiercely.*] The brute !

HELGA.

The time may come when I can resist him no longer—when he will tell me he has done everything for me and I shall feel myself to be his property, his slave.

[*The DIRECTOR re-enters by door left. OSCAR looks round at him, struggling in the toils of his temptation.*

OSCAR.

[*Breathing hard and labouring under wild intoxication.*] Director, I'm—I'm—I'm sorry for what occurred just now, and if you are still of the same mind I'll—I'll take the bank.

DIRECTOR.

With the greatest pleasure !

[*Movement at centre table. CROUPIER rises and goes out by left door. Another CROUPIER, carrying his spade, enters by same door. The DIRECTOR stops him as he passes through. Meantime OSCAR, in great excitement, goes up to the table. HELGA follows*

M

as far as glass door, which is now thrown open ; stops there and leans against door-post.

DIRECTOR.

[*To CROUPIER softly.*] You are going to take the table ?

CROUPIER.

I am, sir.

DIRECTOR.

M. Stephensson will take your first bank, and call for fresh cards.

CROUPIER.

[*Comprehending.*] I see.

DIRECTOR.

When you deal them *he will win*. You understand me ?

CROUPIER.

Perfectly.

[*CROUPIER goes up to his seat at table, back to audience.*

CROUPIER.

[*In a loud voice.*] Qui prend la banque ?

AMERICAN SENATOR.

Cent.

OSCAR.

Deux cent.

AMERICAN SENATOR.

Trois cent.

OSCAR.

[*Louder.*] Cinq cent.

AMERICAN SENATOR.

Sept cent.

OSCAR.

[*Still louder.*] Mille.

CROUPIER.

[*In a loud voice.*] Mille dans la banque ! Mille dans la banque ! [*To OSCAR.*] C'est a vous, monsieur !

OSCAR.

Encore des cartes, s'il vous plait.

[*OSCAR takes banker's chair, centre, face to audience. Speaks aside to Attendant carrying bag, and a large heap of counters is placed before him. Punters seat themselves about table. AMERICAN SENATOR at end on left. The broken-down gambler, ERIC ARNASSON, is seen standing behind him. DOCTOR at opposite end of table. DIRECTOR moving about.*

FINSEN.

[*Coming down to HELGA.*] What does this mean ?

HELGA.

[*Excitedly.*] Don't ask me—yet.

[*FINSEN goes back to table. Fresh cards are brought. CROUPIER shuffles, hands right and left, cuts, etc.*

CROUPIER.

[*In loud voice.*] Est'ce que quelqu'un va banco ?

AMERICAN SENATOR.

Banco !

[*OSCAR deals cards and takes up his own ;
SENATOR takes up his.*

OSCAR.

[*Excitedly.*] Huit !

AMERICAN SENATOR.

[*Throwing down cards.*] Yours, sir !

[*HELGA draws breath of relief and goes up to
back of CROUPIER's chair.*

CROUPIER.

[*In loud voice.*] Deux mille dans la banque—Faites vos jeux, messieurs !

[*Counters, money and notes laid on table.
Attendant claps hands for silence. OSCAR
serves cards and wipes his forehead.*

OSCAR.

[*Lifting his own card nervously, then speaking
excitedly.*] Neuf !

AMERICAN SENATOR.

[*Throwing down his cards.*] Yours again, sir !

[*HELGA turns towards audience with a look of
joy, then goes round to back of OSCAR's
chair. DIRECTOR comes down, rubbing his
hands, meets WAITER, speaks to him,*

Waiter goes back, DIRECTOR returns to right of table. OSCAR serves cards—third time.

OSCAR.

[*Lifting his own cards with trembling hands.*]
Huit !

AMERICAN SENATOR.

The bank wins again !

[*Movement and murmurs about table. HELGA moves to left, ERIC ARNASSON comes down stage as if going out hurriedly by door right. He stops, stares in front of him, breathes hard, hesitates, then goes back and is seen looking closely over CROUPIER'S shoulder. Attendant claps for silence. OSCAR serves a fourth time. Then wipes his forehead once more.*]

VOICE.

[*On right.*] Carte !

VOICE.

[*On left.*] Carte !

OSCAR.

[*Intensely nervous, lifts his own card, seems afraid to look at it, does so and cries excitedly.*] Neuf encore !

AMERICAN SENATOR.

The bank wins a third time !

OSCAR.

[*Rising.*] And stops.

[*General movement at table. ERIC ARNASSON comes down, his face twitching, his eyes aglow. OSCAR gathers up his winnings in a bowl and comes down left, with the bowl in his trembling hands.*

OSCAR.

[*Panting, breathless, speaking in gasps and looking right and left.*] Helga! Helga!

[*He comes face to face with ERIC ARNASSON, stops, and steps backward with a look of horror. The two men stare at each other, eye to eye. Then ERIC ARNASSON crosses hurriedly and passes out, looking back hurriedly as he reaches the door. OSCAR staggers to table and drops the bowl on to it.*

OSCAR.

[*As if awakening from his wild intoxication.*] Can it be possible that I—I too— Oh, oh!

[*The music breaks out again in Ball-room, accompanied by a peal of laughter. At same moment HELGA comes down, glowing with delight.*

HELGA.

Oscar!

OSCAR.

[*As if holding her off.*] No, no!

HELGA.

What is the matter with you?

OSCAR.

Lost! Lost! All in vain——

HELGA.

What do you mean, Oscar? Haven't you won everything? Aren't we rich now? Can't we do as we intended?

OSCAR.

[*In a fever of hysterical excitement.*] Why so we can. [*To WAITER, who enters from right with glusses.*] Boy, bring the champagne here.

WAITER.

But the Director——

OSCAR.

Bring it here. [*WAITER sets down tray right table. OSCAR dips his hand in bowl and takes out note.*] Take this for it. [*Draws back, returns note to bowl, and takes another from his pocket.*] No, this.

[*HELGA crosses to chair right of table; OSCAR, with feverish hand, pours wine into two glusses.*]

HELGA.

[*Quivering with joy.*] Are we to drink to your luck, Oscar?

OSCAR.

[*Offering glass.*] No, to ourselves.

HELGA.

[*Raising her glass and jingling with OSCAR'S.*] Ourselves, then!

OSCAR.

Ourselves! [*OSCAR drinks, gulping down the wine, then drops the glass and puts his foot on it.*] Do you know what that is, Helga?

HELGA.

That!

OSCAR.

That is our love!

HELGA.

Broken? What are you saying, Oscar?

OSCAR.

I'm saying farewell to you, Helga, because this is the end—the end of everything between you and me.

HELGA.

[*Gasping.*] You are going to leave me?

OSCAR.

Yes, in three minutes I shall be gone.

HELGA.

[*Rising.*] Oscar!

OSCAR.

[*Imperatively.*] Sit down.

HELGA.

[*Sitting.*] I don't understand. What have I done?

OSCAR.

What have you done? You've made me a liar, a thief, and a cheat.

HELGA.

Mercy! What an expression!

OSCAR.

Don't let us be nice about words, Helga—a liar, a thief, and a cheat! [*HELGA drops her head; OSCAR stands over her.*] Oh, Helga, Helga! How I wanted to begin again; to live a new life; to return home that I might restore all and expiate all! How I wanted to be a *man* once more and take my place among other men! But you played on my lowest passions and the dregs of my wretched nature that came to the top—you found my miserable soul beating vainly at heaven's gate, and you dragged it down again to this hell of gibbering apes.

HELGA.

[*Wrathfully.*] Oscar!

OSCAR.

[*Bearing her down.*] Go back to Finsen. Unite your wretched destiny with his. He has everything a woman like you can want. I have nothing but my disgrace and my despair.

HELGA.

Have you lost your senses that you can talk to me like this?

OSCAR.

No, I've come to them at last, Helga. For five years I've been your servant—your slave. If it is weakness to love a woman to all lengths and ends of love, to waste your life on her, to be ready to see the whole world perish around you if only you can win her smiles, then *I* have been pitifully, wickedly weak.

HELGA.

[*With feeling.*] Oscar!

OSCAR.

That's how I have loved you, Helga—more than family, friends, reputation, happiness, everything. You came nearer to me than my father, nearer than my mother, nearer—God forgive me—than my wife and child, and I sacrificed all of them——

HELGA.

[*With genuine emotion.*] Oscar, I did wrong. I confess it. But believe me I have loved you beyond anything in the world.

OSCAR.

No, you have loved yourself—yourself, Helga—and me only as a means to your own glory. When a woman loves a man she upholds his honour and protects his good name, but you have stolen both from me that you might feed your vanity and pamper your pride.

HELGA.

[*In a rapid whisper.*] Oh, I was a wretch. I know it. When you pictured the life we were to live in London I was afraid to be poor and tried to find a way of escape. That's all, dear. I only misjudged the means for a moment.

OSCAR.

You have misjudged them all along, Helga. You misjudged them when you came between me and my sweet young wife; when you persuaded me to the treachery that broke her heart and killed her; when you tempted me to the crime that ruined my father and destroyed myself. I yielded; I consented; I plead no excuse; I deserve no pity; I was a blind, blundering monster, but thank God, my eyes are open at last.

HELGA.

[*Breathlessly.*] Then—you love me no longer.

OSCAR.

That's it—I love you no longer. I always knew I was a fool for my pains—that the woman I wooed wasn't worth the winning—that she wanted to give me nothing while I gave her all. Again and again I tried to stop on my downward course and I couldn't do it. But the infamous act you tempted me to has liberated me at last, and I am going back to Thora.

HELGA.

To Thora?

OSCAR.

Yes, because I am returning to her child—to make it up to my daughter for all I did amiss to her mother who is dead—to my people too, in God's good time, for the ruin my sins have brought them.

HELGA.

No, no, you cannot leave me! Oscar! I implore you to pardon me. Give me one more chance. I will go with you now and leave everything behind me—all the Dead-sea-fruit of my foolish triumph.

OSCAR.

[*Turning away.*] Too late!

HELGA.

[*Holding him.*] Hush! You cannot leave me in a place like this. You said yourself you could not. Listen! I shall not always be nice looking—I've not so many years left you know. If I fail in my profession men like Finsen will soon forget me, and I shall be nothing in the future but one of the women who haunt these rooms. Thora said I should be, and she was right. Take me away!

OSCAR.

Too late! Too late!

HELGA.

No, no, you cannot leave me to-night—not to-night at all events. Yield to my wish once more—only once more, Oscar.

OSCAR.

[*Struggling with his love for her.*] I've yielded to your wish again and again, Helga, and every time I've sunk deeper and deeper than before. I yielded to it half an hour ago, and since then you have brought me so low, that lower I could not sink and live. Therefore I cut you out of my heart and wipe you out of my life. Whatever it may cost us we part here and now. Your course lies that way, mine this—Farewell!

[*Choking with emotion he breaks away from her, and is crossing to door left when the DIRECTOR comes down to him. At the same moment HELGA turns up and meets FINSSEN.*

FINSSEN.

What's wrong?

HELGA.

[*In an agitated voice.*] Nothing—nothing!

FINSSEN.

Is it—the cards?

HELGA.

[*Eagerly.*] No, no, no!

FINSSEN.

It is—I see it is! [*Hurrying back to table.*] Wait!

HELGA.

[*Following him.*] Neils——!

DIRECTOR.

[*To OSCAR, suavely, confidently.*] And now, my dear colleague, if you will bring your bowl to the treasury——

OSCAR.

[*Quivering with anger.*] The treasury !

DIRECTOR.

You know what we agreed——

OSCAR.

Agreed—— ?

DIRECTOR.

About the winnings, the money——

OSCAR.

Keep it ! Give it back ! I shall never touch one coin of it—not one damnable coin ! If I was fool enough to do your work I'm not rogue enough to take your wages. Away with it—to hell and damnation !

[*OSCAR sweeps the bowl off the table, and notes and counters fall on the floor. He is making for door left when DOCTOR OLSEN comes down and stops him.*

DOCTOR.

Oscar ! Listen to what they're saying.

AMERICAN SENATOR.

[*At back.*] Impound the last bank !

FINSEN.

[*At back.*] Examine the cards!

[*Murmurs and commotion at table.*]

DIRECTOR.

[*Gathering up notes and going up with bowl.*] Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Surely you cannot think——

DOCTOR.

[*To OSCAR.*] Is it true what Finsen means?

OSCAR.

Yes.

DOCTOR.

You were so dead to all feelings of honour and duty——

OSCAR.

Yes, yes.

DOCTOR.

Then you are a lost man. [*Taking revolver from his hip pocket.*] Here—take this.

OSCAR.

[*Recoiling.*] No, no.

DOCTOR.

You cannot live a day longer after a disgrace like that. Take it—there is no other way.

OSCAR.

No, no, no!

DOCTOR.

Oscar, I was your dead father's friend. He was a man of honour—of stainless honour—and shall his son——

OSCAR.

[*Grasping at revolver.*] Give it to me.

DOCTOR.

Heaven will be more merciful to you than man,
Oscar. Good-bye—and God help you!

[*DOCTOR goes a step up. Tumult behind increases. OSCAR stands breathless, staring wildly before him.*

OSCAR.

[*Hoarsely, brokenly.*] Dead! Dead in disgrace and in a foreign country! Just when my true life was beginning—when I had something to live for! My God! My God! Never to see home again—never to see the child—never to go back and make amends! Good-bye, mother—my little Elin——

MANY VOICES.

[*About table at back.*] A—h!

DOCTOR.

[*Coming down, in hushed whisper.*] Go—go! I'll tell them you are dead.

OSCAR.

[*Firmly, resolutely.*] No, no, no! It is braver to

face it out—to fight it out—to live it out to the last!
I cannot die! I *will not* die! I will live, whatever happens!

[*He throws the revolver into the chair and goes out firmly. The murmurs about the tables rise to threatening cries. DOCTOR picks up the weapon, listens for a moment to the increasing tumult, and then, as if by a sudden thought, cocks the revolver, fires it into the air and follows OSCAR hurriedly. At the sound of the shot the gamblers come down in confusion, crying, "WHO WAS IT?" "WAS IT HE?" and fly off right and left. Only HELGA and FINSSEN, the DIRECTOR, ATTENDANTS and CROUPIERS remain.*

DIRECTOR.

Clear the tables and lower the lights. Order the trumpet and begin the procession.

[*The tables are cleared and lights lowered; CROUPIERS and ATTENDANTS go off right, DIRECTOR left. HELGA and FINSSEN come down—HELGA in great agitation.*

FINSSEN.

Calm yourself. It may be somebody else.

HELGA.

[*Wildly.*] It's he—I know it's he! And you have been the cause!

FINSSEN.

My dear Helga!

N

HELGA.

Don't speak to me. I hate you—I loathe you—I never wish to see your face again.

[FINSSEN falls back. HELGA comes down right.

HELGA.

[With wild emotion.] Oh, what fools women are in their vanity and pride! God help me! God forgive me! If he has gone—if he killed himself—Well?

[DOCTOR OLSEN returns, followed by DIRECTOR,

HELGA.

[Gasping.] Oscar——?

DOCTOR.

Oscar Stephensson is dead.

[With a low cry HELGA staggers backward, and sinks into chair on left. At same moment OSCAR is seen crossing verandah. He hesitates, looks back into rooms, then goes on with firm step. At next instant a trumpet call is heard and music swells up. The door from Ball-room is burst open and a company of girls in Grecian costume, laughing merrily and crying, "THE TAB-LEAU!" "THE PROCESSION!" encircle HELGA's chair, with its banner, and strip off her domino. A chorus of men enters, bringing a canopy of flowers. The canopy is put about HELGA's chair and she is lifted on to six men's shoulders.

Meantime the people have returned by stair-cases and galleries, carrying armsful of

flowers. The lights go up, the music grows louder, the chorus swells out and the procession begins. HELGA, now in Grecian costume, is carried across, round and down again. The girls dance at either side of her, the men sing in her train, and the people on galleries and staircases pelt her with flowers. She tries to bow and smile, but as often as she does so her face breaks down to an expression of pain and misery; until at length, after a great effort, she falls back fainting.

The stage is covered with flowers, the air is raining roses, and the chorus is singing "The Triumph of Venus" as the curtain slowly descends.

THE FOURTH ACT

SCENE same as Act I, Interior of Inn-farm, but now more bare and cheerless. It is New Year's Eve. The wind is whistling about the house ; there is a great snowstorm. It is night, and the hanging lamp is lighted.

MAGNUS is sitting by the stove. His face is sullen and his hands are deep in his trouser pockets. Sheep dog lies at his feet. The SHERIFF and ANNA are standing by dresser, making an inventory. ANNA is holding a lighted candle. ELIN, a young girl of fifteen, is counting the plates.

SHERIFF.

Six dinner plates ?

ANNA.

Seven.

[There is a louder blast of wind, the outer door is opened and the PASTOR enters, muffled up in a scarf and splashed with snow.

PASTOR.

[Pushing the door back.] Ugh ! What a night ! We haven't had such a storm this many a year. The

snow is three feet deep in the drifts already ; so as the Sheriff had to sleep at the Parsonage, I thought I had better come over to fetch him.

SHERIFF.

Thanks ! I shall be ready presently, Pastor.

PASTOR.

[*Unrolling his muffler and sitting right of table.*] So this is to be your last night in the old home, Anna, and everything is to be sold up to-morrow ! What a pity ! Well—[*taking out snuff-box*—naked came I out of my mother's womb, and—[*snuffing*—naked shall I return thither !

[*MAGNUS shuffles impatiently in his chair.*

I've known the old house through all its days of joy and sorrow since your poor husband that's dead—God rest his soul——

ANNA.

[*Who has come down.*] God rest his soul !

PASTOR.

Since he came here to carry away his bride. And a nervous, blushing little bride she was, too ! Nearly as young as Elin here, and as free from care as your grand-daughter herself.

[*MAGNUS makes a contemptuous growl and kicks at wood in stove.*

But heaven help us, what changes the years bring ! I'm sorry for you, Anna, that misfortunes should fall so fast on you in the evening of your days. I'm sorry for Magnus, too, for to give him his due he has made

a splendid fight for it! Ah, if that unhappy scape-grace who died abroad could be here to-day what a lesson he would learn! When a man does wrong——

MAGNUS.

[*Swinging round.*] Oh, for the Lord's sake, let's have done with this.

PASTOR.

[*Rising.*] Magnus Stephensson, if we *are* in trouble, let us behave like God's rational creatures anyhow.

MAGNUS.

[*Kicking at wood again.*] Rational hell!

SHERIFF.

[*Closing his book with a bang.*] Finished at last and ready to go, Pastor.

[*PASTOR goes up, buttoning his coat, and joins ANNA. ELIN goes to settle for SHERIFF'S coat and hat. SHERIFF comes down. MAGNUS rises.*

MAGNUS.

Is it all over, sir?

SHERIFF.

Yes, it was a long job, but it's over at last.

MAGNUS.

I mean is it certain that the auction must take place to-morrow?

SHERIFF.

Never been a doubt of it that I know of.

MAGNUS.

[*Closer.*] Look here, sir. Give me another chance, and you shall have everything I owe. Let me have four years more, and you shall see what I can do.

SHERIFF.

[*Shaking his head.*] Past praying for, my friend.

MAGNUS.

Don't say that, sir. My people have farmed this place for a hundred and fifty years. Give me three years more, sir—only three.

SHERIFF.

Impossible!

MAGNUS.

[*Glancing round at ELIN, then in a low, pleading voice.*] Sheriff, don't be hard on me. I don't care a straw about myself, but there's the girl. Give me a chance for the child's sake, Sheriff! Two years more—just two!

SHERIFF.

The girl is young and strong—let her go into service.

MAGNUS.

[*Bridling up.*] Service! [*Controlling himself.*] You are quite right, sir; the girl and I can take care of

ourselves, but there's the old mother. She was born in this house and expected to die here. Give me one more year, Sheriff—one single year.

SHERIFF.

No use wasting words. Matters have gone too far. The only thing I can do for you now is——

MAGNUS.

Is what, sir?

SHERIFF.

Pay me the interest before nine o'clock to-morrow morning and I'll stop the sale on my own responsibility.

MAGNUS.

Eight thousand crowns!

SHERIFF.

That's the amount of it.

MAGNUS.

[*Bursting into wild laughter.*] You ask me to find you eight thousand crowns before nine o'clock to-morrow morning? You might as well ask me to find you the moon.

SHERIFF.

[*Putting on hat and coat which ELIN has brought down.*] Then let us say no more on the subject. The Bank has been very patient, very indulgent——

MAGNUS.

The Bank indulgent! Has the Bank got a mother? Has the Bank got a child? The Bank is a great, grinding monster without bowels of compassion for anybody. God damn the Bank and all its fools and flunkys!

[SHERIFF goes up to door. PASTOR comes down with both hands upraised.

PASTOR.

Magnus Stephensson, I will ask you to remember you are taking God's name in vain.

MAGNUS.

[*Laughing bitterly.*] Am I? You do that often enough—you do it every Sunday. You pray to God in your churches and what does He do for you? What does He do for anyone? What has He done for me? If God cares what happens in this world let Him do something now. Here's His chance. I want eight thousand crowns before nine o'clock tomorrow morning, and if God can do anything let Him find me the money and save my mother and the child from starvation. But He can't—He can't!

PASTOR.

[*Hurrying out with his hands over his ears.*] Blasphemy! Blasphemy!

[*Exit PASTOR and SHERIFF. MAGNUS follows them up, sends a ringing laugh after them, clashes door and returns to seat by stove. ANNA takes books from cupboard and lays*

them on table. ELIN steps down to MAGNUS, stands behind his chair and puts her arms about his neck.

ELIN.

You must not think about me, Uncle Magnus. Wherever you go I will go too. And then—[*creeping round on to his knee*—who knows what may happen before the Sheriff comes back in the morning? This is New Year's Eve, you know. All good things come at New Year. They say miracles come at the turn of the year, uncle.

MAGNUS.

[*Putting her away and rising.*] Go to your grandmother, my child. She is getting ready for prayers. I must shut up for the night.

[*MAGNUS goes up followed by dogs. ELIN crosses to table. ANNA rings house bell.*

ANNA.

I wonder why I did that! I forgot the servants were all gone. I hope they reached their homes before the storm began—I should pity a dog that had to be out on a night like this.

ELIN.

[*Opening her book and reading.*] “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

ANNA.

[*Reading.*] “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.”

ELIN.

"He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

ANNA.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

[*They close their books. ELIN rises, raises her head and shuts her eyes.*]

ELIN.

Oh Father, bless Uncle Magnus, so that he may fear no evil. Dear Jesus, send the miracle that will save Uncle Magnus and grandma and me. It is such a little thing to you, but such a great, great thing to us, and we shall all be happy and dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen!

[*She gathers up the books and takes them back to cupboard, while ANNA lights a candle at dresser.*]

I'm sure He will, grandma—I'm sure God will send the miracle before to-morrow morning.

ANNA.

[*Handing candle.*] God give you a good night, my child!

ELIN.

And you, grandma!

[*ELIN goes in lower door left. MAGNUS returns, followed by dog. ANNA lights another candle.*]

MAGNUS.

Not likely to be disturbed by travellers on a night like this—that's some consolation anyway. Where's Elin?

ANNA

Gone to bed. Poor child, she grows more and more like her mother. Sometimes I think it can only be a dream that our dear Thora is dead.

MAGNUS.

[*Raking out stove.*] A dream!

ANNA.

If you had heard her praying for the miracle it would have filled your heart brimful. Of such is the kingdom of heaven!

MAGNUS.

But miracles don't happen, mother—except such as we make for ourselves.

ANNA.

What do you mean by that, Magnus?

MAGNUS.

I mean——

ANNA.

What?

MAGNUS.

If a traveller came to this house to-night with the eight thousand crowns we want in his pocket——

ANNA.

Well?

MAGNUS.

Do you think I should hesitate to take them?

ANNA.

My son, you don't mean it. If I thought you meant it I should die—I should die this very minute.

MAGNUS.

[*In another tone, taking down hanging-lamp.*] Never mind, mother. It doesn't matter whether I meant it or not, the temptation isn't likely to come to me. Let us go to bed.

ANNA.

You've borne a terrible burden, Magnus, and if I could only have helped you to bear it——

MAGNUS.

[*Going up.*] You have. But the wretch who comes after the prodigal gleans in a barren field, you know.

ANNA.

[*At step.*] My poor Oscar! He wasted his life, poor boy! It was all my fault. I didn't bring him up properly.

MAGNUS.

Mother!

ANNA.

But if he died as he did perhaps it was only because he wanted to come back rich, so that he could

pay off the mortgage and make us all happy. I used to think of that sometimes, and pray for it so often. But now, if he could come back poor—I shouldn't care how poor—as poor as the prodigal in the parable——

MAGNUS.

Mother, I can't hear you talk like this—I can't and I won't! Oscar is dead, but he treated you shamefully.

ANNA.

Don't say that, Magnus.

MAGNUS.

But I do say it. And I say, too, that he lived in disgrace and died in disgrace; and, now that he is gone, I'm not going to pretend that I wish he could come back.

ANNA.

Ah, well! The Lord knows best what he is doing. Good-night, Magnus!

MAGNUS.

Good-night, mother!

[They are parting for the night when a sharp knock is heard on the outer door.]

ANNA.

Somebody coming!

VOICE.

[Without, loud but tremulous.] God be with you!

ANNA.

[*In a terrified whisper.*] Magnus!

MAGNUS.

[*In a loud agitated voice.*] And with you!

[*He crosses to door and opens it. There is a rush of wind and a wild drift of snow. Then a man appears on the threshold, wearing a long fur coat, covered with snow. MAGNUS holds the lamp over his head and the light falls on the man's face.*]

STRANGER.

Can I have a bed here to-night, and shelter for my horse?

MAGNUS.

[*After looking back at his mother.*] Come in, sir.

[*The STRANGER steps forward. MAGNUS closes the door, re-hangs lamp, and puts on a snow-cap.*]

STRANGER.

'The little mare is hot—she'll want a rub down and a rest before you give her a feed.

MAGNUS.

I'll see to that, sir.

[*ANNA comes down to stove and begins to re-kindle fire. The STRANGER follows her with his eyes and looks round room with a dazed expression.*]

ANNA.

Won't you take off your cloak and cap, sir ?

STRANGER.

[*Numb and dazed.*] Eh ?

ANNA.

Your cloak and cap, sir, and I'll put them to dry by the fire.

STRANGER.

[*Recovering himself.*] Ah, yes, of course, certainly.

[*He removes his cap and takes off his coat. She hangs them on chair by stove. Then he sits right of table while she kneels by fire, breaking sticks into it and blowing them into flame.*]

ANNA.

You have had a terrible ride, sir.

STRANGER.

It was bad, certainly.

ANNA.

A gentleman must have been very anxious to get on with his journey to travel on a day like this.

STRANGER.

I was—I had something to do at the end of it.

ANNA.

[*Glancing round at him as if his voice awakened memories.* Have you come far, sir?

STRANGER.

Altogether? Yes, very far—from England.

ANNA.

[*Glancing again.*] From England?

STRANGER.

I suppose you've never been as far as that, land-lady?

ANNA.

No, sir.

STRANGER.

Nor any of your family?

ANNA.

[*Glancing round again, then breaking sticks noisily.*]
N—o! That is to say—— Won't you come up and warm yourself, sir? [*Rising and crossing to table.*]
You'll be hungry after your long ride—what can I give you to eat?

STRANGER.

[*Crossing to stove.*] Anything—anything you have ready.

ANNA.

I'm afraid I've nothing ready—nothing good enough for the like of you, sir.

O

STRANGER.

Don't you always keep smoked mutton in an Iceland house?

ANNA.

Oh yes, if that will do. [*Glancing again.*] Then perhaps you are an Iceland, although you come from England?

STRANGER.

Yes, I'm an Iceland.

ANNA.

What is your name?

STRANGER.

[*After a moment, facing aside.*] They call me—Christian Christiansson.

ANNA.

[*More easily.*] Well, it's lucky you found us up. We were on the point of going to bed.

STRANGER.

I suppose the other members of your family are gone already?

ANNA.

There's only one besides what you've seen—my grand-daughter—and she had just gone off as you came in.

[*ANNA clears table and lays cloth.* STRANGER looks round.]

STRANGER.

Do you know, landlady, I've slept in this house before?

ANNA.

Must have been long ago then—I don't remember you.

STRANGER.

This is a portrait of yourself, isn't it?

ANNA.

Used to be, but I was younger when that was like me.

STRANGER.

And that's a portrait of your husband?

ANNA.

Then you've not been here for more than ten years, sir, for my husband is ten years in his grave.

STRANGER.

It is more than ten years—in fact fifteen.

ANNA.

[*After looking fixedly at him.*] We've seen trouble since you travelled in these parts before, sir.

STRANGER.

Ah, I've heard of it. [*Facing about.*] You had a son——

ANNA.

That was my son who opened the door.

STRANGER.

But another son—a younger son.

ANNA.

Yes, but we—we never talk of him, sir.

STRANGER.

Died in disgrace, didn't he?

ANNA.

Who knows that? Man sees the deed, they say, but God the circumstance.

STRANGER.

They say hard things of him in Iceland though.

ANNA.

It needs no skill to wound the defenceless, sir. He did wrong—I'm not defending him—but a better hearted boy never lived in the world. Everybody loved him and he loved everybody. He never changed to his mother either—never! Both my sons have been good to me. No mother ever had such good sons, and if he sinned he suffered too and——

[She breaks down and turns aside.]

STRANGER.

[Aside, with emotion.] God bless her! My mother! *[Facing about.]* I beg your pardon. Naturally his mother cannot think ill of him whatever he did. But this is the first time I've heard a good word for him since I came to Iceland. They told me his very

name was execrated, and that if he had lived to come home again and show his face at the farm his own brother would have flung him into the road.

ANNA.

[*At the click of a lock.*] Hush! He's coming back.

[*STRANGER turns back to stove. ELIN re-enters.*

Elin! I thought you were in bed and asleep, child.

ELIN.

But I awoke and heard you had a visitor, so I got up to help, grandma.

STRANGER.

[*In a fluttering voice.*] My child!

ANNA.

This is my grand-daughter, sir.

[*STRANGER turns with a troubled face and at sight of the girl he starts as if he had seen a ghost. ELIN, very bright and cheerful, smiles and curtsies. With a nervous gesture he takes her hand and holds it, struggling to control himself.*

ANNA.

Now that you're here you had better lay the supper, Elin.

ELIN.

Yes, grandma.

ANNA.

Put on the smoked mutton and black bread and I'll go to the elt-house to make the coffee.

ELIN.

Yes, grandma.

ANNA.

Make yourself at home, Christian Christiansson—
Elin will wait on you.

ELIN.

[*Looking up at the dresser.*] Christian Christiansson!

She trips about from dresser to table, laying the food and humming to herself, while the STRANGER stands back to the stove, watching her with visible emotion.

STRANGER.

Has anybody ever told you that you're like your mother, Elin?

ELIN.

Oh yes, grandma always says so.

STRANGER.

Grandmother and I have been talking of your father.

ELIN.

My father!

STRANGER.

You don't remember him?

ELIN.

Oh no, sir. He died when I was quite little.

STRANGER.

What a loss that must have been to you, my child!

ELIN.

I can't say that, sir, because, you see, Uncle Magnus has been the same as a father to me all my life.

STRANGER.

What a loss to your father himself, then!

ELIN.

I can't say that either, sir, because he lived five years after I was born, and it seems he never took any notice of me.

STRANGER.

Did grandmother tell you so?

ELIN.

Oh no, sir. Nor Uncle Magnus neither. But everybody knows about my father and even the girls in school knew that.

STRANGER.

So—so you're not sorry your father is dead, Elin?

ELIN.

It wouldn't be right to say that, sir.

STRANGER.

At all events you feel no love for him?

ELIN.

Well, you see I never knew him. You can't love somebody you never knew, can you ?

STRANGER.

But if he had lived to return home you might have come to love him—yes ?

ELIN.

Oh yes ! And yet I don't see how I could if what people say is true.

STRANGER.

What do they say, my child ?

ELIN.

They say he was unkind to my mother. So why should I think he would have been kind to me ? But see, your supper is ready. Grandma will bring the coffee presently—won't you begin with the meat, Sir ?

STRANGER.

Thank you, my child !

[He sits back of table and tries to eat. She helps him to the food, humming to herself as she does so.]

ELIN.

Didn't grandma call you Christian Christiansson ?

STRANGER.

Oh yes. Ever hear my name before, Elin ?

ELIN.

Everybody in Iceland has heard it, sir, because it's the same as that of the great composer—the great Icelandic composer who lives in England. He writes operas on the Sagas, and nobody knows who he is, or where he was born, or what family of the Christianssons he comes from, but everybody loves his music and his name is famous all over the world.

STRANGER.

So you—you have heard of him, have you?

ELIN.

I sing his songs, sir. They are beautiful! Would you like me to sing one of them while you eat your supper?

STRANGER.

Will you?

ELIN.

I should love to. [*She trips across right, takes guitar from wall.*] This was my father's guitar, and now it's mine, and it's such a good one. [*She pulls up spinning-stool to right of table and begins to play.*] Which should it be, I wonder? But perhaps you know them all and would like me to sing something in particular?

STRANGER.

[*Much moved.*] Sing—sing anything you like, my darling!

[*She looks up at him, smiles, then sings. He ceases to eat, drops his head on his hands and listens with deep emotion. When the song ends ANNA returns with a smoking coffee-pot.*

ANNA.

Here it is at last? The fire had gone out in the ilt-house and I had work enough to kindle it.

STRANGER.

[*Recovering himself.*] The coffee—good!

[ANNA pours out the coffee, ELIN hangs up guitar, MAGNUS re-enters.]

MAGNUS.

The little mare was nearly done, but I've rubbed her down and given her hay—she shall have a mash before we go to bed.

STRANGER.

Let us have a glass of brandy first.

ANNA.

The brandy, Elin.

ELIN.

Yes, grandma.

ANNA.

And then clear the table while I make up Uncle Magnus's bed for Christian Christiansson.

ELIN.

Yes, grandma.

[ELIN brings bottle and glasses and carries tray with dishes through inner room, while ANNA takes sheets from chest and goes into Guest-room. The two men sit right and left of table.]

STRANGER.

[*Pouring out brandy.*] Perhaps I ought to tell you why I'm troubling you to-night, farmer.

MAGNUS.

Please yourself, sir

STRANGER.

To tell you the truth, then, I'm here to attend the sale of your farm to-morrow morning.

MAGNUS.

So that's the business that brought you ?

STRANGER.

It is. For fifteen years I've been living abroad, and now I want to settle down. I'm sorry for you, though, and if it's painful to hear me talk like this——

MAGNUS.

[*Laughing bitterly.*] Not at all ! For fifteen years I have been ploughing the waves, and now—[*gulping down the brandy*] I'm reaping the breakers, blast them !

STRANGER.

Don't be down-hearted ! Nobody knows what the future has in store for him. It's a black night to-night, but all the same the sun will rise to-morrow morning. Life is sweet, my friend, whatever happens.

MAGNUS.

You think it is, sir ?

STRANGER.

I know it is, and if we cannot believe when the clouds are dark that the world is ruled in righteousness——

MAGNUS.

[*Impulsively.*] Bosh! [*More quietly.*] Excuse me, sir, but you talk like a man who has never known misfortune. If you're a profligate and a prodigal, a rascal who has robbed his own father, or a cheat who has left his child penniless, you may live in luxury and travel as far as the sun; but if you are a poor devil who has worked his fingers to the bone, as likely as not you'll be thrown out into the road.

STRANGER.

[*Uneasily.*] Is that the sort of legacy that's been left to you by the prodigal brother your mother was talking about?

MAGNUS.

She was talking about him again, was she?

STRANGER.

Does she often talk of him?

MAGNUS.

Too often. She was the best mother a man ever had, and he repaid her with neglect and contempt.

STRANGER.

Contempt?

MAGNUS.

What else would you call it? He lived five years abroad, but wrote to her only once. She forgave him for that, though, and when he died—you know *how* he died?

STRANGER.

Died abroad, didn't he?

MAGNUS.

Shot himself in a gambling-hell—everybody in Iceland heard of it——

STRANGER.

Well?

MAGNUS.

When he fell into that foul dishonour she thought he was only trying to get money enough to come home rich and make amends to us all.

STRANGER.

[*Eagerly.*] But if that had been true—I don't say it was, but if it had been—if your brother had really been struggling to make a fortune solely in order to wipe out the debts he had left behind him——

MAGNUS.

A fortune made in a gambling-hell! There would have been a curse on every coin of it, and I should have flung it in his face.

STRANGER.

[*Rising in his excitement.*] But if it had been the wages of work—honest work, the sweat of his brow and brain while he ate the bread of poverty in loneliness and obscurity—and if he had lived to come back at last——

MAGNUS.

[*Rising and smiting the table with his fist.*] If he had lived to come back in the midst of the ruin he has caused it would have been God help both him and me.

[*ANNA returns from the guest-room.*

ANNA.

There, sir! Your room is ready and you can go to bed at any time.

[*MAGNUS goes through inner room. STRANGER crosses to chair by stove.*

STRANGER.

I shall want to be wakened early—I suppose the Sheriff will be here soon.

ANNA.

The Sheriff, sir?

STRANGER.

I've just been telling your son that I intend to bid for the farm at the auction to-morrow morning.

ANNA.

So that was what you had to do at the end of your journey?

STRANGER.

Yes, that was what I had to do, lady.

ANNA.

What can a gentleman like you want with a lone-

some farm like this? It is hungry land, I assure you. My son is the only one who has ever worked it to advantage, and if he has fallen into difficulties it isn't his fault. His difficulties are not so very serious either—eight thousand crowns arrears of interest. When the Sheriff went off this evening he said if my son could find that much by nine o'clock to-morrow morning . . . I'm taking a great liberty, sir, but if—if any kind friend could lend him the money——

STRANGER.

[*Facing aside.*] Well?

ANNA.

Magnus would work his fingers to the bone to repay every penny. Then there's the girl. If the auction comes off she'll have to go into service, and my son can't bear the thought of it. Neither can I, for I'm always thinking of her father. He was a gentleman, and to think of his daughter being a drudge to somebody——

STRANGER.

[*Facing round.*] Landlady, I had set my heart on buying the farm. I had a particular reason for wishing to buy it. But since I've talked with your son I've partly altered my plans, and I'll lend you the money to pay the interest——

ANNA.

[*Joyfully.*] You will, sir?

STRANGER.

If you'll give me the girl to adopt as my daughter.

ANNA.

[*Sadly.*] I didn't think your condition would be like that, sir.

STRANGER.

Why not? Are you thinking of the girl or of yourself, lady?

ANNA.

I am thinking of my son. No man was ever so wrapped up in a child. If she were his own he could not love her more dearly.

STRANGER.

So you think he could not part with the girl even for her own welfare and happiness?

ANNA.

I don't say that, sir; and perhaps if it were put to him properly——

STRANGER.

Put it yourself, lady.

ANNA.

You would tell us where she was to go to, and what she was to do, and how she was to be brought up.

STRANGER.

Indeed I should.

ANNA.

After all, it would be just like going into service.

STRANGER.

Just.

ANNA.

Only she would be a lady, not a servant.

STRANGER.

Only that.

ANNA.

[*Looking at him again.*] You are a stranger, but something tells me you would be good to her—and you would, wouldn't you?

STRANGER.

I should be as good to the girl as if—as if I were her own father.

ANNA.

[*Wiping her eyes.*] I don't know what to say to you sir.

STRANGER.

Say nothing to me—speak to your son, lady.

ANNA.

You will lend him the money to pay the interest immediately?

STRANGER.

Immediately.

ANNA.

Eight thousand crowns—you could find it all by nine o'clock to-morrow morning?

STRANGER.

[*Taking out pocket-book.*] See; there's enough in this pocket-book to pay your interest twenty times over. And I'll not *lend* the money to your son, I'll *give* it to him if he'll give me the girl instead.

[*MAGNUS returns, carrying smoking wooden bowl, and crosses towards outer door.*

ANNA.

[*In an agitated voice.*] Magnus!

MAGNUS.

[*Coming down.*] Mother!

ANNA.

[*Nervously.*] You've done a good part by Elin all her life, Magnus, but the world is hard and life uncertain and——

MAGNUS.

[*His face clouding.*] Well?

ANNA.

[*Falteringly.*] I'm sure you would like to see her settled for good with those who are well off and can give her everything of the best.

. MAGNUS.

I don't take your meaning, mother.

ANNA.

[*Faltering still more.*] This gentleman is rich, and he wishes to adopt a daughter, and if—if you will let Elin go to him, he—he will pay the interest and you can keep the farm.

MAGNUS.

[*Wrathfully.*] Mother!

ANNA.

[*Confused and breaking down.*] Don't look like that, Magnus. I only thought——

MAGNUS.

You thought I could sacrifice Elin to save myself?
[ANNA sinks into chair left of table, MAGNUS turns to STRANGER.] I'm much obliged by your offer, sir, but it's the farm, not my niece, that is for sale.

[*Goes towards door.*]

STRANGER.

Wait!

MAGNUS.

[*Turning.*] Well?

STRANGER.

You have decided for yourself fast enough—have you thought of anybody else?

MAGNUS.

Who else is there to think about?

STRANGER.

Your old mother, for one. If you refuse my offer, and the house is sold over your heads, what is to become of her? [MAGNUS looks stunned.] What is to become of the girl too—have you thought of that? You've been good to the child, no doubt, but in a case like this you've no right to speak for her.

MAGNUS.

[Putting down bowl.] She shall speak for herself then. [Going to step and calling into inner room.] Elin! Elin! Elin!

[ELIN comes in running, with a look of alarm.]

ELIN.

[Between MAGNUS and STRANGER.] What is it?

MAGNUS.

[In a quavering voice.] Listen! This gentleman has told your grandmother he wishes to adopt you as a daughter, and he offers to pay my debts if I am willing to let you go.

ELIN.

Uncle!

MAGNUS.

I have said you shall choose for yourself, and so you shall.

ELIN.

But uncle——!

MAGNUS.

Elin, I am a broken man, and I have no longer a home to offer you. After the auction to-morrow

morning, God knows what is to become of grandmother and you and me, where we are to go, and what roof is to cover us. But this gentleman is rich, and he promises to provide for you all your life and give you everything you can need, everything you can wish for.

ANNA.

[*Crossing to ELIN.*] Isn't it wonderful, Elin? Isn't it like a miracle? Like an answer to your prayer, my child?

ELIN.

But grandma——!

STRANGER.

Don't speak yet. Let me first tell you who I am. We spoke of Christian Christiansson, the composer, and you sang his song to me. I am Christian Christiansson! [*ELIN makes an involuntary cry of joy.*] But when I am in England I have neither wife nor child to share my life with me, and I am quite alone. Will you not come and take their place, Elin?

ANNA.

Think of that, honey! You love music—you take after your poor father that way—and you would travel about, just as your dear mother used to do.

ELIN.

[*With glistening eyes.*] It would be beautiful.

ANNA.

Wouldn't it? The gentleman would make a lady of you, and you would wear no more poor clothes and do no more rough work.

ELIN.

I can't think of anything in the world I should love so much. But I cannot—I must not.

ANNA.

Elin!

ELIN.

I must stay with my uncle. He has loved me and cared for me ever since I was a little mite, and I can't leave him now because he is going to be poor and homeless.

MAGNUS.

Elin, make sure! Make sure, my lass! The gentleman would care for you, too, and treat you the same as if you were his own daughter.

ELIN.

But if he were to treat me as if I were his own daughter, I should have to think of him as if he were my own father. Would you like that, Uncle Magnus? And would grandma like it?

ANNA.

We should sacrifice ourselves, honey, that you might be well off and happy.

ELIN.

But I shouldn't be happy if you were not, grandma. And when I remembered Uncle Magnus living alone somewhere and thinking of me perhaps, and no one to care for him—what would be the good of my beautiful clothes then?

ANNA.

But don't you see, dearie, Uncle Magnus is poor now, and he—he cannot afford to keep you.

ELIN.

[*With troubled face.*] Oh !

ANNA.

And don't you see, too, that if you stay with Uncle Magnus he will lose the land, but if you go to this gentleman he will be able to keep it, and pay his way and win back everything ?

ELIN.

Do you *want* me to go, grandma ? And does Uncle Magnus want it ?

[*She turns from one to the other. They drop their heads. Her face brightens, she holds up her head with a proud look and speaks in a brave but breaking voice.*

I *know* you don't ! You are only thinking of Elin ! As for the land, if it comes to losing that, or losing me, I know what Uncle Magnus will say. He will say—I *know* he will—"Let me keep my little girl, and the land—the land may go !"

MAGNUS.

[*With a burst of emotion, opening his arms to her.*] And so I do, my darling !

[*ELIN leaps into MAGNUS's arms. ANNA joins them. They cling together and cry like children. STRANGER comes down and drops into chair by stove.*

STRANGER.

[*Shaken with stifled sobs.*] Oh God! My God!

ANNA.

[*Bustling about.*] There! There! Uncle Magnus must feed the pony and I must make his bed, and Elin—you must go off immediately, or the carol-singers will be here before you are stirring in the morning.

[*MAGNUS takes up bowl and goes out. ANNA passes through curtains. ELIN comes down to STRANGER.*

ELIN.

[*Holding out her hand.*] Good-night, Christian Christiansson!

STRANGER.

[*Rising and taking her hand.*] It was very brave and sweet of you, my child, to choose poverty instead of wealth—to remain with your uncle and grandmother instead of coming to a stranger. But if—if instead of Christian Christiansson I had been *your own father*, would you have come to me then?

ELIN.

[*Shaking her head.*] I couldn't feel as if you were my father, sir. What I call a father is one who has nursed you on his knee when you were a little thing, and kissed you and coaxed you when you were sick, and thought of you and cared for you always.

STRANGER.

[*Entreatingly.*] But if . . . if I were able to say to you "My child, my dear, dear child, I may have done nothing for you, but I am your father all the same, and I want you to be a daughter to me, and I will be a father to you, and we shall never be parted again"—if I were able to say that to you, would you still hold to your uncle?

ELIN.

[*Bowing her head.*] I couldn't help it, sir, because Uncle Magnus has been my real father after all.

STRANGER.

[*Turning up.*] Too late! Too late! What a man sows that shall he also reap. [*Coming back.*] You are quite right, Elin. Your uncle has done everything for you, and you are everything to him. It wouldn't be fair if your father could come back now and take you away. Cling to him and comfort him, my child. Comfort your grandmother also. Make it up to her for those whom she has loved and lost . . . Elin!

ELIN.

Yes, sir?

STRANGER.

Can you give me pen and ink and a sheet of writing paper?

ELIN.

Oh yes, sir.

[*ELIN brings writing materials from dresser.*

STRANGER *sits, writes a line on a page of note paper, takes out pocket-book, puts paper inside of it and closes it up again.*

STRANGER.

It is late, very late, I've had a long day to-day, and I may be asleep when the auction begins in the morning. Will you take this pocket-book and give it to the Sheriff the moment he arrives?

ELIN.

With pleasure, sir.

STRANGER.

You will not open it, or show it to anybody else, but you will carry it to your room at once and put it under your pillow, and to-morrow morning you will be up early and give it to the Sheriff before he begins the sale—will you do this for me, dear?

ELIN.

Indeed I will, sir.

STRANGER.

And now you must go to bed.

ELIN.

But I'll see you in the morning, sir?

STRANGER.

Who can say? We may both have other things to think about by that time, so we had better say Good-bye to each other now.

ELIN.

But am I not to see you again, sir?

STRANGER.

Who can say that either? I have come a long, long way—and now—now I have to go still farther.

ELIN.

But we shall see you some day, shall we not?

STRANGER.

[*Fervently.*] Yes, yes, God willing, and then—then we shall all be happy and all be reconciled.

ELIN.

[*With swimming eyes.*] I shall never forget you, sir

STRANGER.

Nor I you. I shall always think of the brave little girl I met once—only once—and then could see no more.

ELIN.

You are only a stranger to me, sir, but——

STRANGER.

I *am* only a stranger to you, my child, but we have come together on the great, great ocean of life and now—now we must say Good-bye and part.

ELIN.

Good-bye, sir!

STRANGER.

Good-bye, little girl, and God bless you!

[*ELIN goes towards the bedroom door, then looks*

back. STRANGER is looking after her with a quivering face. He opens his arms to her.

STRANGER.

[In a low, tremulous voice.] Elin !

[The girl comes back. He folds her to his breast and kisses her. Then she passes into her room and he drops back to chair by table, his body shaken with sobs. After a moment ANNA comes through curtain and MAGNUS returns to house.

ANNA.

Fallen asleep !

MAGNUS.

[Contemptuously.] Drunk too much seemingly !

ANNA.

[Right of STRANGER, touching his shoulder.] Hadn't you better go to bed, sir ?

STRANGER.

[Looking up, rising unsteadily, pretending to be drunk.] Heigho ! *[Laughs.]* Your brandy must be pretty heady, landlady. No matter ! It will be a good nightcap and make me sleep the sounder.

ANNA.

You'll not have too much sleep if you want to be ready for the auction. The bells ring at daybreak on New Year's Day, and the Sheriff will be here soon after.

STRANGER.

[*Laughing and reeling.*] Why, so he will. And since we cannot agree about—girl I must buy up the farm whatever happens. I told you I wanted it for—particular purpose, but I didn't say what I was. It's my secret, lady, but I don't mind telling you—I want it for my mother!

ANNA.

Your mother?

STRANGER.

That's so! She was born—these parts and—poor old thing would like—end her days here.

ANNA.

So she tells you to buy up my homestead?

STRANGER.

[*Laughing yet more wildly.*] Not she! She doesn't know anything about it. That's—my surprise. Tell you the truth, lady, I've not been—good son, but when I go away again I want—feel—dear old soul will be happy and comfortable and have—roof to cover her. [ANNA turns away from him. He faces right to MAGNUS.] Sorry—buy your house over your head, my good man, but business—business, you know. [*Slaps MAGNUS on back.* MAGNUS shudders.] Don't look so glum, old fellow! You're—luckiest man in Iceland—ask me. You've got your health and your good name and your mother, and that sweet girl to love and to love you, so what—devil—you got—complain about?

[MAGNUS steps away from him.]

ANNA.

[*Coldly.*] Your candle is burning in your bedroom, sir.

STRANGER.

[*Gathering up his coat, etc.*] And don't you look so downhearted—lady. You've had your troubles, no doubt, but . . . you . . . shall drink my health under my mother's roof-tree to-morrow morning! [ANNA also turns away from him. *He sobers suddenly, looks from one to the other, steps up behind ANNA, goes down on one knee and kisses the fringe of her scarf. Then rises, staggers into Guest-room, laughing hysterically, as one who must laugh lest he should cry.*] Good-night! Good-night!

[ANNA and MAGNUS look into each other's faces.]

MAGNUS.

[*In a low voice.*] Did you hear him?

ANNA

About his mother's roof-tree?

MAGNUS.

The man can have no heart—no bowels. "Business is business," he said, when he talked about buying the place over our heads.

ANNA.

And when he spoke of his mother ending her days here he never once thought of me.

MAGNUS.

He never thought of Elin either. He would have taken the girl away from us without a moment's hesitation. And now he'll take the farm from the girl herself without a qualm.

ANNA.

He must be rich.

MAGNUS.

Richer than anybody has a right to be.

ANNA.

Surely God cannot intend that anybody should be so rich while other people are so poor.

MAGNUS.

[*At table, pouring out brandy.*] That's what I was thinking.

ANNA.

It's hard, cruelly hard, to be turned out of house and home by the first person who comes along with more money.

MAGNUS.

[*Gulping down brandy.*] That's what I was thinking!

ANNA.

"There's enough in this pocket-book," he said, "to pay your interest twenty times over." He could lend us enough to satisfy the Sheriff in the morning and never miss it, never know it was gone.

MAGNUS.

[*Gulping down brandy again.*] That's what I was thinking.

ANNA.

[*With a look of fear.*] Magnus! I didn't mean that.

MAGNUS.

He has drunk a good deal—he will sleep heavily.

ANNA.

Magnus, what are you thinking of?

MAGNUS.

[*With fixed, wild eyes.*] I am thinking we must have money. Eight thousand crowns before nine o'clock to-morrow morning. If not, my old mother will be homeless and little Elin will be cast into the road.

ANNA.

But you don't mean that you would——

MAGNUS.

Why not? This man stands between my dear ones and shelter, and if they are to be saved from ruin and starvation——

ANNA.

Oh, what have I done? Give me the bottle. Let us go to bed.

MAGNUS.

[*Drinking out of neck of bottle.*] I must do it.

ANNA.

No, no, no! He is your guest, my son. He has trusted himself to your protection. Besides, haven't you noticed he resembles somebody? His voice has troubled me ever since he came; and if I hadn't known your brother was ten years dead and buried—when he spoke about his mother and said he hadn't been a good son——

MAGNUS.

[*With a low, hard laugh, blowing out lamp.*] So much the worse for *him*! He's a prodigal himself, it seems. Very well, let prodigal pay for prodigal!

ANNA.

[*Holding him.*] Magnus, I beg, I pray—for your mother's sake, Magnus.

MAGNUS.

[*Breaking away, speaking in a stifled sob.*] Yes, for my mother's sake and little Elin's!

[*He casts her off, goes up to guest-room, listens at door, then opens it, enters quickly and closes the door behind him.*

ANNA.

Oh, God forgive me! If the stranger should awake! If there should be violence! [*Runs up to Guest-room door, tries it, finds it bolted, and calls in a terrified whisper.*] Magnus! Open the door. It's only mother. It was all my fault. Let me come in. [*She listens. In the silence there come the faint sounds of sledge bells.*] Sledge bells! [*She goes down on her*

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knees at door and calls again in a terrified whisper. Magnus! Some one is coming. [*Sounds of horses galloping in snow, hiss of runners, cracking of whips, blowing of horns, and barking of dogs. She listens, then whispers at door.*] It's the post. Quick, quick! My son, my son!

[A loud knock as with whip handle on door.]

VOICE.

[Outside.] God be with you!

ANNA.

[Rising.] Too late! Wait till they're gone.

MANY VOICES.

[Outside.] Helloa! Helloa!

[Outer door is thrown open, flooding the hall with daylight. Enter the POST, JOHN VIDALIN, GUDRUN, the FACTOR, and AUNT MARGRET, all very bright and merry. ANNA, with white face, stands with back to guest-room door.]

FACTOR.

[Laughing.] Here we are at last!

JOHN.

Couldn't travel yesterday on account of the snow storm.

GUDRUN.

But the Factor actually got us to start away as soon as it stopped at twelve o'clock.

FACTOR.

Well, we don't kill a pig every day, do we?

AUNT MARGRET.

You've nearly killed *me*, if that's what you mean.

FACTOR.

[*To POST and JOHN.*] Bring the good things out of the sledge, my lads, while Gudrun lights the stove and lays the table.

[*JOHN and POST go off hurriedly. GUDRUN bustles about. FACTOR and AUNT MARGRET remove snow-clothes.*]

FACTOR.

And how's Anna? We seem to have startled her out of her senses.

AUNT MARGRET.

No wonder—coming like half-starved ghosts at this time in the morning.

FACTOR.

[*Laughing.*] Ah, she'll forgive us for that, though. Where's Magnus?

AUNT MARGRET.

And where's my precious Elin? Not out of bed, I suppose. I'll go and wake her. [*Knocking at ELIN's door and calling.*] Elin! Elin!

ELIN.

[*Within.*] Is it the Sheriff?

AUNT MARGRET.

[*Calling.*] The Sheriff? Bless you, no, child, but your crazy old auntie, who has come to see him kicked out neck and crop without waiting to wash her face.

ELIN.

[*Within.*] I'm coming.

FACTOR.

[*Laughing and rubbing his hands.*] And now what about the other one, Anna?

ANNA.

[*In terror.*] The other one?

FACTOR.

The new-comer, you know.

ANNA.

New-comer?

FACTOR.

Well, guest—friend—whatever you like to call him.

ANNA.

[*Gasping.*] Of whom are you speaking, Oscar Neilsen?

FACTOR.

Why, of the traveller who came to lodge at your house last night.

ANNA.

[*Creeping back to door.*] The traveller who came to lodge——

FACTOR.

You don't mean to say you don't know who he is?

ANNA.

I—I don't understand you, Factor.

FACTOR.

[*Laughing again.*] Well, this is good! Enough to reconcile us to our blindness in town. It was not until he had started on his journey that we found out who he was. But that *you* shouldn't recognise him——

[*Laughing again.*]

AUNT MARGRET.

No wonder, though! So changed, and supposed to be ten years dead!

ANNA.

[*The truth dawning on her.*] Ten years dead! What are you telling me?

FACTOR.

[*Stopping his laughter suddenly.*] Surely he can't have lost his way in the snowstorm. Do you mean to say that no traveller came to this house last night?

[*ANNA is gasping, trying to speak, when the door of Guest-room opens behind her and MAGNUS comes out. His face is changed—the hardness of despair has disappeared.*]

MAGNUS.

Yes, a traveller did come here last night, but he has gone.

FACTOR.

Gone!

MAGNUS.

He must have left before daybreak—his room was empty.

ANNA.

[*In a whisper.*] Is it the truth!

MAGNUS.

God's truth, mother!

[*With a look of relief she sinks into chair back of table. He comes down to chair above stove.*]

FACTOR.

Strange! Very strange! He took a large sum of money out of the Bank yesterday, and everybody supposed he meant to buy up the farm.

[*Enter ELIN with pocket-book in hand. At same moment the SHERIFF, followed by JOHN and POST carrying hampers.*]

ELIN.

Has the Sheriff come yet?

SHERIFF.

[*Coming forward.*] Who is asking for the Sheriff?

ELIN.

The gentleman gave me this pocket-book last

night, and told me to deliver it to you before the auction began this morning.

SHERIFF

[*Opening book at table.*] Not for me, though. [*Reading paper.*] "For Elin—Oscar's daughter, from Christian Christiansson."

AUNT MARGRET.

A present for Elin, perhaps !

SHERIFF.

[*Counting notes.*] What's this ? One—two—three—fifty—one hundred—two hundred thousand crowns. Enough to buy the farm four times over !

AUNT MARGRET.

Kiss me, my precious !

FACTOR.

Me, too, granddaughter ! [*Company break into expressions of surprise and delight.*] Now, who do you think has left you this great fortune, little one ?

ELIN.

[*With eyes full of joy and bewilderment.*] Why Christian Christiansson !

FACTOR.

' Aye, aye, but who is Christian Christiansson ? Don't know ? You neither, Anna ? Why, Oscar—your own son, Oscar—who isn't dead at all, and has come back to make it up to everybody.

ANNA.

[*In breathless whisper.*] My son !

ELIN.

[*Tenderly, joyfully.*] My father !

FACTOR.

Now I understand everything. Prophecy is the wise man's guess, and I guess this was Oscar's way of revealing himself. But we shall see him again——

ANNA.

Did he say we should see him again, Elin ?

ELIN.

Oh yes, and then we should all be happy and all be reconciled.

[*Company shout with joy.* ANNA and ELIN
come down to MAGNUS. Carol singers are
heard approaching.

FACTOR.

Quick, my lads ! I want to drink the health of my godson ! Here come the New Year carol singers, and that's Christian Christiansson's great anthem.

[*All bustle and happy chatter. Table laid by
many hands.* PASTOR enters.

AUNT MARGRET.

Come in, Pastor.

PASTOR.

Just heard the wonderful news, Margret! Think what circumstantial stories those lying newspapers circulated!

AUNT MARGRET.

Nothing wonderful about that—every dog has his tail.

PASTOR.

But think of the lies they told about Oscar when they knew no more than we did!

AUNT MARGRET.

Nothing wonderful about that either—slander is an old tom-cat that never lost his way in the dark, you know.

[A group of boys and girls troop in and range themselves on right. Chairs are drawn up to table and company prepare to sit. A smoking pot is brought in and FACTOR pours out a cup of coffee.]

FACTOR.

[Left of table, raising his cup.] Brothers and sisters, I give you a toast. Anna's long-lost son, *our* long-lost son, Iceland's long-lost son—Oscar Stephenson!

[The company shout in response. Church bells begin to ring a merry peal.]

ELIN.

[Behind MAGNUS, with her arms about his neck.] It's like the miracle, isn't it, Uncle Magnus?

MAGNUS.

[*With emotion.*] It is the miracle indeed!

[*Boys and girls begin to sing. Company seat themselves at breakfast, all talking and laughing merrily. Then the scene darkens, voices die down and the Tableau appears.*

It represents the Opening Scene of the Play but now in its winter aspect. A great white world, stern and grand, with a streaming crimson light across the topmost peaks and the glistening blue glaciers from the sun which has just risen. On a mountain pass a man is seen ascending. It is OSCAR STEPHENSSON. The church bells are heard, very faint, as if far away in the valley below. He stops to listen, then goes on a few paces. After a moment there is the sound of singing in the distance. He stops again, and smiles as one who is happy and satisfied. The sunlight comes down the mountains and floods the great white world with a soft crimson. The bells and the singing gently die away. OSCAR STEPHENSSON, at the top of pass, takes his last look back, as the curtain slowly descends.

THE END.

*** * *** At the discretion of the Manager three further Tableaux may be added in the same Scene to typify the return and pardon of the prodigal :

TABLEAU ONE.—*OSCAR at top of pass ; MAGNUS following him ; the brothers embracing.*

TABLEAU TWO.—*Inside the house ; company rising from table as door bursts open and MAGNUS enters, showing OSCAR on the threshold.*

TABLEAU THREE.—*The entire company at breakfast ; OSCAR in chair back of table with ANNA on left, ELIN on right and MAGNUS behind him. All laughing and talking ; boys and girls singing.*

Printed by BALLANTYNE & Co. LIMITED, London

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